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gay, switchboard, week, people, pride, lesbian, houston, call, community, parade, brian, corrected, car, involved, group, organization, worked, situation, waving, volunteer

SPEAKERS

Bruce Reeves, Brian Kever, Deborah Bell



00:02

what it consists of is Friday night is an evening of two hours, kind of a GET TO KNOW you type thing. And let's hear, here's what's going to happen for the next two weekends. And then Saturdays and Sunday of that weekend 10am to 6pm and then Saturday and Sunday of the next weekend 10am to 6pm very intensive training, going through different things, preparing the volunteers for what they will be going through. And like I said it, it really opens up your mind to a lot of things you you learn a lot of things about yourself and other people that you don't you wouldn't otherwise think about you wouldn't otherwise be real cognizant of someone that needs to say something unless you prompt them to say something. So it really is good for you as a person and for you as a switchboard volunteer.

B

Bruce Reeves 00:58

You shall get a lot of different kinds of phone calls right I mean, I guess a lot of your calls are just about bars and that kind of stuff. Right?



01:04

Well the calls run the gamut. You can get a lot of bar calls. A lot of our evening type calls are people looking for club what type of club you know.

D

Deborah Bell 01:17

Okay, and we need to do our official Id do you want to do it for

B

Bruce Reeves 01:20

us? Sure. And then we will we're gonna break I think for short promo but you are listening to

the one to three program here on KPFT 90.1 FM Houston,



01:30

you hear the sounds of the waves brush up against the sand where he has written both of your names with a heart around it,



01:35

you were looking at the sky burning red with the sunset. Quickly a car drives up alongside of you, you stop for red light. Suddenly the car is surrounded by a circle your blanket coming in closer bottles are thrown out of car windows, the sound of glass breaking baseball bats against metal hand grabs your hair glass at your feet in your face in your eyes, a fist across your face again and again. Die queer tell them tell them.



02:07

Homophobia can kill. Education is the only lasting weapon against bigotry. Which is why the lesbian and gay public awareness project wanted you to hear and think about this message. For more information write us at Post Office Box 65603 Los Angeles, California 90065.



02:35

Hi, I'm not home right now. It's three o'clock Monday morning. And I'm at the KPFT doing my radio show esoteric adventures, where I feature oddities and highlights from the recorded universe. So hang up, tune in to 90.1 And don't call back you will wake up my fish. Don't forget that's esoteric adventures with your flight attendant gym. Mondays 3am. Okay, pft Houston.



Bruce Reeves 03:14

Is anybody home? Of course, that was Jim Braun. And Jim is going to be engineering for us on Sunday so they can play some pretty.




Deborah Bell 03:28

I hope they're getting their sleep.



Bruce Reeves 03:31


But Chris, we were talking about the two kinds of phone calls which I'll get into switchboard, right, I guess

 Deborah Bell 03:35

we need to explain what the switchboard is, is a service where people can call and they can ask questions of concern to gay and lesbian people. And for a lot of people, it's their first contact with the community. And sometimes it's up persons who are going through crisis periods in their life, maybe a young person who's just trying to come out or someone else who maybe had just had a breakup in a relationship and, you know, they they're reaching out this way. So what what are some of the types of things that the switchboard for provides? Well,

 04:11


we're there to respond to just about any type of situation. As I said, the calls will run the gamut. Anything from it's 6pm and I want to go out tonight, but I don't know where to go because I've just moved here two weeks ago, to I'm just now figuring out that I'm gay. And people are there to listen to share to respond to those people that have those concerns and issues. We have a lot of information about the community. We're pretty much a clearinghouse for local information, what goes on that particular day that week, what goes on on a continuous basis. We have an extensive referral system where we have the businesses, the bars, the individuals that are listed with us, so that someone can call up and say, Hey, I need such and such. And we can likely provide them with a name or an avenue to approach that particular situation.

 Deborah Bell 05:12

And then sometimes you're just an understanding with neuron, the other end of the phone line, which can be something that someone needs more than anything else, what were the hours of operation there from 3pm to midnight, seven days a week. But if you had more people willing to staff but other hours, you might want to expand those hours, we

 05:33

would, we would, indeed, the next thing that we would add would be a 12 to three shift on the weekends. And, yeah, we'd love to have more volunteers.


 Deborah Bell 05:42

What do you look for in a volunteer?

 05:45

Well, they go through an interview process over the telephone. And what we're looking for is someone that is willing to commit themselves to a three hours shift once a week for at least six months, someone that can learn and use basic active listening skills, to learn to be a good ear to be objective, and not to be judgmental with our callers. Because when someone calls and


they have a problem, you certainly don't want to say, now you should be doing such and such and such. Now, the correct mode is to sit there and say, Yes, I understand what you're saying, you know, I'm, you know, I feel I understand, not to say, well, this is what I think you should do.

 Deborah Bell 06:30

What's the hardest thing for volunteer to deal with on the switchboard? Would you say? Well,

 06:37


suicide calls are probably one of the most difficult ones to deal with. Because you're talking about someone whose situation is so critical, they are seriously considering taking their life. They're feeling a sense of hopelessness and worthlessness. And the object there is to get the caller to identify with why they're feeling so hopeless and why they're feeling so worthless. And make them realize that what they're going through is simply going to be, it's going to be resolved.

 Deborah Bell 07:10

What's a funny situation?

 07:16


People that call us for things that we don't provide, like people that call us for dates. Uh huh. People that call us and think that we're going to come out and meet them. You know, since we're the gay and lesbian switchboard, well, we should just have a whole string of people that will come out and just, you know, visit them.

 Deborah Bell 07:32

We sometimes get the radio station. Yeah.

 07:35

People will call the oddest places and say, Oh, well, let's, let's see if you all can come out and meet with me, you know?

 Bruce Reeves 07:41

Well, no. And they during the after our show, we probably have, we always try to have telephone people here answering the phones because unfortunately, the gay and lesbian switchboard usually open from about four ish to midnight ish. And so from midnight to 3am, on Saturday night, we get a lot of those phone calls.



07:59

We need to shift open just not just forever. Yes, we do.



Deborah Bell 08:03

Though, there's a thought.



Bruce Reeves 08:06

And even forward the fund to the state. shall come up here and staff.



Deborah Bell 08:12

Now you've actually worked on the phones. Do you still do that? Oh, yes. I've



08:16

worked on the phones for about two years. Okay. So



Deborah Bell 08:19

you've been around a while with organization? Yeah, just a little while. I remember you saying earlier you had served on just about every committee. The organization has



08:28

most of the committee's. I've been representative for from the telephone staff to the Board of Directors. I've been on the board of directors. And currently I'm secretary to the board of directors and I'm the Public Relations Officer.



Deborah Bell 08:42

And the switchboard recently started doing something new. They added another phone line for a special reason which kind of came out of the events of last summer with the killing Paul Broussard and made this community and I guess the city of Houston in general, much more aware of the issue of hate crimes. Talk a little bit about the hate crimes hotline.



09:05

Okay, well, we started it in early January. And it's a number that people can call and unlike the switchboard number that's only open from three to midnight. We are available 24 hours a day for that. If there's no person there to take the call in person, we have an answering machine that they can leave their message on and we will get back with them and retrieve that information. What we will do is to compile the information that they give us, talk to them, listen to them and make the appropriate referrals if they need to for legal assistance from medical assistants. Basically, you know, to be there for someone to lean on for a shoulder and also to get those facts down so that we can report those statistics to the FBI, too. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force so that we can lobby Congress for more awareness of hate crimes committed against gay and lesbian.

D

Deborah Bell 10:08

And Akash. I forgot what the question was, I was going to ask.

B

Bruce Reeves 10:16

Come into the phone numbers for the switchboard again, or five to 930 to 11. That's the main number, right? And the crimes hotline numbers 5299 615-529-3211 and 5299615.

D

Deborah Bell 10:30

Thank you, Chris, for being with us. And congratulations on the honor of being honorary Grand Marshal for Lesbian Gay Pride Week 1992. For the switchboard, right.

B

Bruce Reeves 10:39

And we're going to take a short musical break here and we're going to be listening to your girlfriends, we won't be silent my

D

Deborah Bell 10:44

girlfriend.

B

Bruce Reeves 10:45

Thanks again, Chris. Whoa, we won't back down,

D

Deborah Bell 10:58

we won't back down. In fact, we'll just come out and just be stronger than ever, because we really believe that pride equals power. And we're not just talking about political power or power over anything. Just the the empowerment for self and our power in a community and what it

over anything, just the empowerment for self and our power in a community and what it means to be a community. And we have with us now two people that are being honored as grand marshals for this year's Pride Week, and will be waving to us from the convertibles in the parade there. Brian's got his queen waved down. Yes, yes, yes. His big tent. Now Brian has led off for the RunKeeper is one of the grand marshals. And every year that I remember of the parade, Brian has been at the front of the parade carrying the opening banner. And so this will be his first time to actually be in the parade in a vehicle. Is that correct?

B

Brian Keever 11:59

Well, I've been on the executive committee for a few years. And we did some horse drawn buggies a couple of years ago, where we all were in the buggy. But I take that back last year, I was actually in a car but I was sitting down helping in the car as opposed to being the celebrity in the car. I

D

Deborah Bell 12:21

see. And so now you're a celebrity.

B

Brian Keever 12:24

Anyway, yeah, right.

D

Deborah Bell 12:28

Brian is the office manager at this week in Texas, which is a publication in the community fondly referred to as twit and he's just been involved in lots of other things. It amazes me it's kind of like what you eat is dust tested. It goes from one thing to another. What are some of the things you've been involved with in the community, Brian?

B

Brian Keever 12:53

Well, currently, I'm still on the board of directors for Houston's lesbian and gay Political Caucus. I'm involved with the National Weather Association, Houston. Pride Week. I'm a member and one of the head officers at MCC our church, which is Metropolitan Community Church, the resurrection. I just got off of about a bunch of boards because I've been trying to figure out what it's like to not have a meeting every night of the week or two or three you know, that would be nice, you know, so that I'm not renting an apartment just for cats.

D

Deborah Bell 13:28

Those cats are just they have such a life you know, they have the apartment I just come there and change play allow you to leave your clothes there so that you can come in and change every now and

B

Brian Keever 13:37

I've been working for the magazine for DWT six ish years. Around six years. Yeah. So and I've worked on the March on Washington. Working on the 93 I worked on 87 And then when I lived in North Carolina, I worked on the 79 March so I'm working on each one of the march from Washington's

D

Deborah Bell 13:57

yeah so you're not originally from Houston what what your did you make your debut in our fair city in

B

Brian Keever 14:03

1980. Came here to visit and went oh boy, hey, this is a

D

Deborah Bell 14:08

look at these cowboys.

B

Brian Keever 14:11

Finally found man hey and moved here.

D

Deborah Bell 14:14

And so did you get involved in the community right away and organizations.

B

Brian Keever 14:20

I got involved in AD one working on Kathy Whitmire's campaign and became a member of for GPC which was what it was called then. And because I always enjoyed politics, and still do, and I'm also the precinct chair for precinct 39, which is the Greek Orthodox Church of on yo come for the Democratic Party. And I've been very active in party platforms and policies and everything for many years in the Democratic Party. So I've I've kind of stretched his bone as far as you can stretch it. Something that I guess is kind of a compliment. I was at an event recently and they were announcing different people that was here. are. And I guess this is a compliment. They would like to announce the fact that the Carolyn Farbe of Montrose is here to say. Hi,

D

Deborah Bell 15:12



there may spare me.



Brian Keever 15:15

I guess that's a compliment. I've known Carolyn for a couple of years, she's realized there was a lot of work in the community and the other community. So in a way, I guess that was a very nice compliment. They were paying me saying that. Well, here, here he is, again.



Deborah Bell 15:30

Well, yeah, recognizing your contribution to the community. How do you feel about being honored as one of the grand marshals this year?



Brian Keever 15:39

Oh, goodness. It's so hard to describe because I have always been doing the work and been helping out, organizing and doing things like that for the community, as opposed to just sitting there and just being being the person in the car. So for me, it's going to be quite a rush. And I'm very honored. You know, this is my 10 year anniversary for being with Pride Week.



Deborah Bell 16:06

And so you've been with it from the beginning? Well, not



Brian Keever 16:08

really. It's been around since 79. Okay, but I 1982 binary said, Here, hold this. So we started carrier, Larry's name



Deborah Bell 16:19

keeps coming up as being a person. That's how you do you get something going and you leave town and you say here.



Bruce Reeves 16:28

Okay, well, Sherry co underbone has our other Grand Marshal. Hi, Sherry. Hi. And according to this, it says that you were the CO organizer of Houston's first gay pride march in 1976.



16:40

Yes, I'm actually I had thought it was 1975. And I was corrected that it was 1976 by Ray Hill. So

Yes, I'm actually I had thought it was 1975. And I was corrected that it was 1976 by Ray Hill. So oh, this switch? Yes. Yeah. I was most of my actual activism was in the 70s. And I kind of missed out on the 80s. And I'll get to that.

B

Bruce Reeves 17:10

Well, so what was the parade like in 76? What was it first?



17:14

There was no it wasn't a parade. It was a march, there were about 200 paths, a little over 200 people in it. We marched through downtown Houston, our guest special guest. I don't know if you'd call him a grand marshal or whatever was Vito Russo, who was the late film. Producer, producer. And the it was, it was really different because there had never been anything like that here before. And we didn't know what we were going to be getting into. And

D

Deborah Bell 17:54

was that the one that was in response to Anita Bryant



17:57

now that that came the next year? Oh, I see. And people were a little more organized than

D

Deborah Bell 18:04

about how many people were involved in that first mark,



18:07

the one for Anita. I was the one that about 200 people and that was there was a Texas gay Task Force convention. And they were meeting at the University of Houston. So a lot of those people were from Texas, gay taskforce and from other places.

B

Bruce Reeves 18:22

Of course, you're the editor of the new voice, which is their other publication here in town. Yes. Well, weekly publication and how long have you been on the new voice?



18:32

Okay, well, I with the Montrose voice. I had worked for the Montrose star, which was a

forerunner of the Montrose voice for a little while. And when I came back to Houston the first time in 1986, I went to work for the Montrose voice. And I left again the next year and came back in 1989. And I've been editor of the new voice since are the Montrose voice and new voice since 1989.

D

Deborah Bell 18:58

I think a lot of us still think of it as the Montrose voice. Of course, we realize that our community expands beyond the the boundaries of what's called the Montrose area.



19:09

And you were active with the first gay and lesbian organization on the campus. Second, second, have been corrected on oh gosh, another correction. And I've had that corrected in the, in the, in the new voice, I ran a correction on it and tried to get a correction into the pride guy, but it still came out saying the first year, the first organization was the gay liberation Forum, which was there in late 1970 in 1971. And they must have been a real brave bench because we had

D

Deborah Bell 19:44

they had disbanded and we're no longer functioning when you came along and who else was involved at that time? What was going on on campus?



19:54

There were a lot of things going on. As a matter of fact, in the 70s I'm not sure what the situation is like the end. But there was a gay and lesbian artists and performers group also at the same time. And a group that put together a an anthology of people's writing and poetry and stuff that was also kind of a semi closeted gay and lesbian group. So there were there was a lot going on, on campus at that time. out in the community in general, there, there wasn't that much it was it was pre Pride Week, per se, and Houston. And one of the things that my involvement in Pride Week and the reason that this is such an honor for me, is that I was in the group that early on, was pushing for a Pride Week in Houston and is matter of fact, in LXX magazine, which I was editor of in in 77. I ran some editorials pushing for a Pride Week, and really promoted the 78 Pride Week.

D

Deborah Bell 21:01


Well, what do you see the function of Pride Week being?



21:05

I think it's something that's very, very necessary. Every, every year, I think that rather than not to include the years that I was gone. But every year I hear the same thing. And it's usually


to include the years that I was gone. But every year, I hear the same thing. And it's usually from someone associated with the mainstream media or just with the mainstream. Who says why? Why do we need a Pride Week? And the reason we need a Lesbian and Gay Pride Week, and I think that as much as possible without being repetitious, we need to use that every single time is that? Well, it's like our theme this year is pride equals power. And the opposite is also true. A lack of pride, a low self esteem is the most devastating thing that can happen to a person and also to a group of people. And

 Deborah Bell 22:08

we really couldn't have a community if we didn't have some pride in who we are.

 22:13


Yeah. Well, getting back to the reason I was gone, I came out when I was 12. What

 Deborah Bell 22:20

the heck does that mean? Where had you gone? Did you go with Dorothy to to Oz, or basically, yes.

 22:26


In the 1980s, I had so little self esteem, that I thought that the way to improve my life, and to become a part of the world was to change my identity. And so I got married and had two kids. And other than that little hiatus in 1986 and 87. I gradually, over time, realized that this was not the way to go for me. And that it took a lot of growth. And I was someone who originally never would have thought that I would do something like that.

 Deborah Bell 23:11

Now are Josh and Zach going to ride in the parade with you?

 23:15

Josh wheels exit his grandma's house sci fi if the two beautiful

 Deborah Bell 23:19

boys really adorable. And now Now you were married to a gay man Mortu? Yes. So was he was he trying to change his identity too? Is that what that was about? You thought maybe if we try living a straight life, we can.



23:32

Yes, I was married to a close friend who was a gay man. And that was basically the the scenario that the same thing that I'm sure a lot of people go through in the community, which is that, you know, we're going to try this and see if we can do it, quote, unquote, right.



Deborah Bell 23:50

Right. And, and, of course, he's been very ill with AIDS. And that's been another struggle that you've had to deal with in your life raising two children and then having a spouse who you're still very close to. What What else are concerns of the community that you see that Pride Week is part of, I don't know bring making more visible.



24:16

The main thing of gay and lesbian Pride week and I think the theme reflects it this year is self esteem. Be proud of who you are. Be glad you're who you are, and show everybody else that you're proud and glad to be who you are.



Deborah Bell 24:31

No, that's great. That's great. And you're gonna be waving to us from the convertible. Sherry Cohen door bone. One of the grand marshals of the 1992 Pride Week, and Brian see Brian Keever I can't remember what the C stands for Brian, I



Bruce Reeves 24:54

think it's Carlton.



Brian Keever 24:58

No, but something else so you You might want to remember is the fact that, and I say this every year, I guess it's one of those usual things that we have to remember to use those gnl words, you know, don't, don't just say, you know, we're going to do go down to Pride Week, go down and say you're going down to gay and lesbian Pride Week, because you're, there's some kind of empowerment in doing that. And using those two words, you know, when I was much younger than I am now, I would use an expression that Frank Kennedy used to use that say gay is good. And I was one of those little, those little teenagers that go around writing games, good kids, good.



Deborah Bell 25:42

One that wrote the different

B

Brian Keever 25:42

places, you know, that weren't supposed to be in North Carolina at that time. And that just helps you feel good, it makes you it helps you remember that gay is good. And that, you know, it's wonderful, it's powerful. And just, you know, a positive mental attitude toward your own sexuality helps, because we have a lot of young people that look up to us and say, you know, well, here I am 21 years old, I've never been discriminated against, I have a lover, we're doing quite fine. We're wonderful. Hey, we're happy, you know, but for them to be able to get where they got, we need to remind them and that's what projects about is remembering that.



26:21

Right? It's it's another one of those distorted messages that we get not only from the mainstream, but from within our own community, which is the one that says, why make an issue of your sexuality. Well, the people who say this are looking through a narrow lens, because if you look at the whole picture, and see what's happening, we ain't the ones doing that. And we need to get in there and combat what's being done to us.

B

Bruce Reeves 26:49

That's true. I know. That was one of the first questions my parents asked me when I came out to them, you know, was Why Why come out to us at all? Why not just you know, pretend like it didn't exist. And it's like, I said, Well, to begin with, I said, my whole entire life revolves around my sexuality. I said, every group I'm in as a gay or lesbian group, you asked me what I did last week, and I have to say nothing. You know, I said, I've been living a lie. And I said, I'm not gonna do that any longer, because this is who I am. And if you're gonna be brave enough to ask me what I'm doing, I'm gonna tell you.

D

Deborah Bell 27:19

Yeah, I think our friends over at PFLAG parents of Friends of Lesbians and gays have learned that their lives have been enriched by their involvement in that organization and being in touch with their gay and lesbian children. Because a lot of people would otherwise lose their children because we that same situation where you just cover it up, are you pretending now you just you become estranged from your family. And it needn't be that way. It shouldn't be that way. And you know, our lives can all be enrich. It's not necessarily the sexuality that revolves around it's the community that it revolves around. Let's try and and that we are wonderful citizens because we struggle so much to be able to be visible. And while it's come that time to take a break. I do want to thank Sherry And Brian for being with us as grand marshals of pride.