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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

switchboard, people, volunteers, gay, lesbian, training, organizations, hours, week, hate crimes, houston, phones, jeff, call, fundraisers, hear, bars, weekend, group, meet



00:02

The following program contains language or images of a frank or sensitive nature that may be considered objectionable by some listener discretion you continuing tradition on KPFT



00:46

we must destroy the myth Swanson shatter them we must continue to speak out most importantly every gay person must come out you must tell your immediate family you must tell your relatives you must tell your friends if indeed they are your friend you must tell your name you must tell the people you're working with us tell the people in the stores shopping



01:32

once they realize that we are indeed children and we are deed everywhere every every lie every innuendo will be destroyed once and once you do you will feel so much better alone on oh right You find me I have a dream and where will you be when they come Hold on



06:08

Welcome to after hours.



06:11

Amen for that. Bruce Reeves and I'm Kevin Harrell,



06:17

and we're your host this evening on after hours. Our special guests is gonna be some people with the gay and lesbian switchboard talking about switchboard training,



06:28

right, namely Kay Harper and Jeff Mackey.



06:31

Yeah. So there'll be here shortly K Harper is going to be a voice you'll be hearing in the future, as well as she will be one of the CO hosts coming to you, at least once a month here on after hours. We've got lots of things going on tonight, lots of things coming up in the next couple of weeks, we're gonna be doing that. After hours, we're going to be doing marathon absolute marathon, actually, they want us to call it the fundraiser. We're going to be raising fun here in the next couple of weeks and raising some funds for KPFT. So if you like what you hear on after hours, we are gay and lesbian, folks for gay and lesbian people and our friends. And if you like what you hear, be sure and support us in the next two weeks as we start this wonderful process again.



07:15

Absolutely. Because I mean, where else can you hear a bunch of gay and lesbian folks get together and talk about what it's like? Except here at KPFT? Houston. I'm here. And are we? Oh, sure.



07:28

Why not?



07:29

We're clear. Yeah. This is after hours.



07:35

It's feels so good to be in the CCO slot tonight instead of the host lot is like all the pressures sitting over there. I can see it sitting on your shoulders.



07:43

Yeah, I feel really comfortable sitting here, kids. No, really, we've got a great show planned for you, of course, the weekly segment of this way out. And like I said, the gay and lesbian switchboard will be



07:58

here. There'll be here above 30. This way out is coming up at 130. And I think we've got a special spot with with some very interesting, interesting folks at 230. So be sure and stick around and thanks for finding after hours.



08:26

Wow, I love that it's wonderful from Torch Song Trilogy. Yeah. I mean, that song makes me just want to get up and kiss a man. And



08:34

I'm available now. So just kind of looking at some of the I guess the highlights for the week Chris Ray Hill announced his candidacy for justice of the peace.



08:44

Precinct. One place one, if you don't know where you are, girl.



08:48

Yeah, really. It's somewhere in the center in Harris County. And Deborah Dannenberg had another birthday she turned 40. Again,



08:58

not well,



09:00

it's several of my friends and I have had this running argument because I know I got an invitation to her 40th birthday party in October, and then she had another one. So but nobody else in town seems to have gotten one in October. So I don't know. Maybe I'm confused but



09:16

who knows that maybe you're not. You have



09:19

tuned in to after hours here on KPFK 90.1 FM in Houston. I continuing tradition, of course. And our special guests this evening are the gay and lesbian switchboard



09:30

and there'll be tonguing your way at 1230 1230. Or maybe before that just depends.



09:38

Maybe. So of course this week was New Year's. How was your New Year's Kevin?



09:42

It was great. I got back from New York last Friday and heard lots of classical music over New Years. Well, good and yours.



09:50

Well, it was kind of fun. We had seven members of the local family over to New Year's dinner we had the good old fashioned Black Eyed Peas and the kids bitchin am and the camaraderie and you know, basically spent the day with all those wonderful people we want to spend the New Year with snow. That's the kind of the way that's supposed to work. I think it does. And then of course, you come up here on Saturday night and Sunday morning and spend the spend the night with everybody else you're going to spend but we love everybody in the in the KPFT family. And, of course we mentioned before, and we're gonna mention it several times tonight. Marathon is starting next week. We'll be here for two weeks coming to you saying



10:34

Money, money, money, money, money, money and warm. I know we will have



10:37

lots of money songs next week, probably. But funding is very important for KPFT. All the producers and programmers at KPFT are volunteers. We don't get paid to come up here and spend four hours having fun. We're having fun. Absolutely. I'm having fun. You had fun last week, right? Did I? This is my week to have fun. Is that? I don't know. Oh,



10:58

that's it. That's it. You're right. Well, anyway,



11:03

whatever. But stick around with a son. Let's play a little more music.



11:08

All right. This is after hours a continuing tradition on KPFT Houston. Me Somerville, formerly of the commune arts Bronski beat with disenchanted song about growing up and realizing you're different from the whole world and dealing with it. In the studio with me are K Harper and Jeff Mackay of the gay and lesbian switchboard. And let me remind you, you're listening to after hours. Continuing tradition on Pacific escape EFT, Houston. Hi, how's that for a dry opening? Very well, welcome. Thanks for coming down.



11:48

Well, thank you for having us. Oh, sure. So,



11:51

so what kind of exciting things are going on with the switchboard?



11:53

Well, what we're here mostly to do is push training. Yeah.



11:58

Try that again. Jeff. Yeah. Okay. We're



12:00

on here. Yeah. Now we're, we're bade promote training. We have training coming up, starting this coming weekend, next weekend. And we hoping to get some people involved.



12:17

And if somebody wants to sign up, is it too late to sign up? No, no, no. Never too late. When is it too late? No, really? What is the deadline? The latest we've ever



12:27

accepted someone into a training classes when he called at 1030. On Friday that training started. We made him show up the next morning, right? So yeah, we'd like to have a little more notice than that. But, but we really will take people up to Friday night,



12:45

train starts. Training starts on Friday night of next week. So right up to the deadline. But the earliest The earlier you can get to us the better.



12:55

We know more about you, you know more about us if you call earlier,



12:59

right. And that number is 5293211. That's right. Operators are always standing by often standing, often standing down, that's why we need you the hours of the switchboard are normally from four to midnight.



13:14

Pretty much but weekends, we don't have as good a coverage. If you can work weekends, that's when we want you to come come work



13:22

for us. And you know, they don't mean an hour shifts. It's a three hour shift. It's just



13:26

a three hour shift. And it's four, you get to you stay on the same shift for about 14 weeks. And then you get to change it around if you need to, or want to.



13:38

I'd like for both of you to tell us why you decided the switchboard was the right organization for you to join.



13:45

Okay. I got involved with switchboard about nearly three years ago, when actually I heard an announcement about training on KPFT. And I just moved into Houston was looking for a place to get involved. And I thought the switchboard would be a good starting place because it's so interconnected with other groups. There's so much information there about other organizations

and things. So I saw this sort of a starting off point and there was just such a need there for volunteers and so much work to be done that I've just sort of gotten primarily involved with the switchboard. And how long have you been with it? Nearly three years. It'll be three years in February. Great.



14:29

And what about you, okay,



14:32

fine. Sounds real silly after that, oh. We'll be the judge of that. Well, the summer of 1987 I was doing bowling, mixed doubles bowling. And the other three people on my team either had been or we're currently switchboard volunteers, and they had all these weird like, words they used and, and in jokes and Things like that screamed girl a lot. They screamed girl a lot. Okay, and so I joined switchboard to find out what was going on with these people and why they were so weird.



15:11

I see. And what have you found there? I mean, what kind of people and a bunch of weird people?



15:16

Yeah. Well, the good that Yeah. People who want to be involved in want to be doing something positive. So it's, it's a good group to be involved with?



15:25

Yeah, I mean, it's it's a wide variety of people. We've got school teachers, we've got social workers, we've got psychologists, I mean, a little bit of everybody, a lawyer, a couple of lawyers actually, at various times,



15:40

and these are volumes where these are people on the board are these are all



15:43

volunteer, people who are on the phone, volunteers.



15:47

Everybody involved with the switchboard is, is volunteer, it's entirely volunteer organization, the board of directors as well or no paid staff. That's why it's very economical. We've tried to keep our, our budget going to the things where it's most needed.



16:02

You have fundraisers, and all kinds of things like that. And



16:06

periodically, yes, we have just had an auction this past month. And we have fundraisers from time to time. Which is another thing if if you don't have the time to, to volunteer, we can always use we can always use donations,



16:22

send \$1. Because let's be grateful for anything, we'd be grateful for anything and switchboard is one of the most economical ways to contribute charitably. Because we we have an annual budget of less than \$8,000 a year, we answer the phones 365 days a year. You know, and we're there. You need someone to talk to in the middle of the night? Well, maybe not the middle of the night, because we're only there till midnight, but in the early hours of the middle of the night, we're there.



16:54

Yeah. So how many trainings are you guys having to share?



16:58

We're gonna be doing five different trainings this year. There's the one that's that starts next weekend, which is January 10 11th, and 12th. And then the following weekend, the 18th and 19th. That's all one training class. And then we'll have another one starting on March 20. And then there's others in June, August and November. I'm not hitting any major holidays, I think we do hit Flag Day this year. Flag Day, I know.



17:25

Can you talk a little bit about training? Is it I mean, is this dry stuff? Are you really gonna bore people to tears for two days? Or actually, it's



17:32

five days, and we don't bore them to tears? What it is, is, is it's a two hour introduction on Friday night, where you get to meet the people who are going to be training you and they get to meet you, and you find out. Yeah, and you find out kind of what you're getting yourself into. Because it's it's not necessarily for everybody, right? You're gonna be doing a lot of will play a lot of games, we do a lot of what we call role plays, where you get to be a telephone volunteer with having somebody who's not going to freak out on you on the other side of playing the caller. We teach you everything that you need to know to answer the phones before you have to pick up a phone for real.



18:23

It's really most of the training is oriented towards learning about the best way to talk with people the best way to listen primarily. A lot of the calls, we take our information calls which are fairly straightforward, but involves learning a whole new way of listening to people and dealing with people and they're which are good skills in life as well as as on the phones of switchboard. But it's it's fun, but it's also challenging deals with some emotional issues. And so it's a lot of a lot of things go into the two weekends.



19:05

Now, we don't ask you to answer the phones until you're comfortable doing it. Right. And we're comfortable that you can do it. Like Jeff said, a lot of our phone calls are what we call information calls. You know, people who want to know where the bars are, you know, you've traveled to other cities, you just come back from New York, called the switchboard there. I share the bars where I know where to go.



19:29

Right. Right. But at



19:30

this convention all week, and I need to see another gay face, preferably a whole bunch of other gay faces. We do. That's what almost a quarter of our phone calls are. We probably do another quarter that are referring to all the different organizations in town. I mean, there's 100, over 100 Different organizations in town, some of which people don't know about. Do you know there's some other support Web? No, I didn't think so. How about gays and lesbians in medicine? Never heard out there, there. And there. That's, that's a big group in the med center. That's amazing. Yeah. And, you know, people just don't know that there are so many different things. You know, there's there's a group, for how old you are for what you like to do. For, you know, what gender you are,



20:20

there are listings and in publications and things of a lot of the organizations that are out there and in clubs and things. But oftentimes, you'll want to know more detailed information about something or looking for something very specific. And it's easier to call and talk to us because we have a lot of information are fairly current.



20:39

And is there an age limit for people to get on the switchboard?



20:44

Um,



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how does how does the switchboard I'm sure, and I hate to, you know, bring that age issue up into it. But I'm sure that there are some guidelines or some bylaws that you



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have to follow. Because of the nature of the organizations,



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we are in the Bible Belt, I'm sure you, you know, feel the heat occasionally,



21:02

occasionally, because we are an organization that takes phone calls and, and deals with some kind of sensitive issues. And we asked our volunteers to sign a contract. And since you can't legally sign a contract until you're 18 years old, that's our minimum age is 18.



21:23

The upper age? I know there's one volunteer who's two years younger than my mother.



21:32

Yes, don't look at me like that. There really is. She is two years younger than my mother. And there have been people, I mean, we have volunteers who are in their, their 50s and one who's heading towards 60. So actually, we're all heading towards 60. But she's real close.



21:49

You mentioned the contract. Okay. What kind of stuff was that entail? I mean, I don't about signing away your firstborn male child or



21:56

No, no, actually, we're signing away. It basically it's, you're not going to tell anybody we're switchboard ears. You're not going to talk about switchboard calls. Someplace besides switchboard or with people other than switchboard people. You're not going to answer the phones when you're drunk.



22:15

You know, that kind of fun stuff. Yeah, technical, dry stuff. Sounds like fun.



22:23

It is a lot of fun.



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It's it's a neat, neat thing to do. You get to meet some really interesting people.



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You were talking about having people answer phones earlier. I know. When when someone they get out of this class, you just got thrown them in a room all by themselves and elements or phones, right? No, no,



22:41

no, no. The first we make a commitment to our brand new trainees that for their first 14 weeks or however long their first shift is they will not be answering phones by themselves. In fact, we won't let them pick up the phone unless there's a qualified switchboard volunteers not qualified but because



23:02

someone who's been there, someone who's been around for a while at least 14 weeks.



23:08

Usually we try and put him with somebody who's been around for a while longer. Because there's a lot of things, you know, little things that you don't cover in training. I mean, where the papers kept, you know, that kind of stuff. You just don't, you're getting so much information and training, that even if we told you where the paper was kept, you'd forget it by the time you walked in the office.



23:27

And other than just training I guess there's probably other avenues for people to get to meet people through the switchboard.



23:34

Oh, yeah. I mean, lots of we try and do a social event once a month. We usually have a potluck every other month. And you get, you know, people bring their lovers they bring their friends, they bring their trucks, digital or whatever. There have been, and, and you get to meet a lot of different people that way. And like I said, it's a group of people from lots of different areas in the community. I mean, some of us are real out and relaxed. I mean, Jeff and I have both, I think both had our pictures in the paper. I know I have, I think you have Yeah. And



24:15

wait, you've had your picture in the paper in correlation to switchboard? Yeah. Okay.



24:20

Um, a couple of years ago, they did a really nice article in the post, about pride. And the picture that they put is their great big huge one above the fold in color was the switchboard banner from the parade the year before. And, you know, so there were lots of us in there. And that was lots of fun. And then there are people who I mean, there's one person who is a schoolteacher, up in the north side of town, and obviously is not in a position to have his picture in the paper very often. At least not identified with a switchboard. So you can write you run the whole gamut of being out or not out. And so switchboard is a great place to, to be as out as you want to be. And you get to meet people, you can interact with other organizations, we do outreach to other organizations to, partly to, for our own benefit to recruit people, but also to find out what these groups are up to, you know, we have a little blurb in our thing that says, you know, coordination meets on Tuesdays, wherever they're meeting this week. And, and, you know, they're kind of a, I forget what it says. But that's a real different from going to a meeting listening to what goes on, and finding out what the group does, and then talking about it among ourselves,



25:49

right? What are most of the calls? Well, that might be I don't know, I don't want to make a blanket. Statement. But

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you want me to give you a statistical override or overview kind of thing?

26:02

Yeah, kinda Okay. And what kind of calls me once a basic call, I mean, that you might get there at the switchboard,

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a basic call is Hi, I'm in town at the Adams Mark Hotel. Where's the closest bar? I'm from Podunk Iowa. And they're just amazed when you tell them well, I need to know a little bit more. Because we do have a lot of different different bars in town. That's probably the most common. We have we do aids information calls. You know, we talk about safer sex we talk about we talk real basic information. I mean, if somebody needs detailed information about HIV or AIDS, we certainly refer them to other people. But we can give basic information on that. We're refer to businesses in town. You know, everything from House sitters, who, who feed your dogs, and all of that, to the books, doors, like Inklings, or the bookstores like studs.

27:05

Do you get any coming out calls,

27:06

we get a lot of coming out calls those that goes into our category called counseling calls, which is kind of a bad term for it. But coming out calls are some of the most fun calls that you get on the switchboard,

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there's some of the most important calls that we take. I mean, this is we're often the only people that that some of these people have to talk to about these things, or they may have no one that, that they know, to talk with about a lot of the issues a lot of the feelings that they're feeling, and so they can call us and have someone who can empathize has been in a similar position, not always the same exact position, but can understand some of the feelings and and relate to them. And it's, it's good for us it's good for the caller as well.

27:50



27:56

How do you go around? Or how do you get around giving advice? Well, we, because I asked that, because I imagine there are a lot of kids in high school that know they're gay, that are really afraid of knowing that and doing something about it and calling but they desperately need to call.



28:17

Yeah. Well, you know, I can't give advice, really. I mean, well, I can I can give advice. But what what works for me is not necessarily going to work for you. Because goodness knows you and I are not the same person.



28:35

It's very tempting. I mean, we're, we're used to in everyday life, friends come to us with problems or whatever, that we just want to give them an instant solution. But we can't be I'm not willing to take their responsibility for anyone else's life to tell them what, what they should do. And some callers really, really want that really asked for it. But it's just not something that we're able to do for our callers,



29:00

especially high school people. Because there's not very much out there. If you're 15 1617. And you can listen to after hours. Maybe if you have access to a car and you don't live too far out and your parents are not going to ask questions about where you're going. You can go to a hatch meeting, which is a group for teenage homosexuals, right. And then there's the group that you all talked about last week smile, which is brand new. You know, there are a few places for gay teenagers to go to gay and lesbian teenagers to go to, but there's not much and sometimes all they've got is just the fact that there's somebody out there who's willing to to say yes, I'm gay. Yes, I'm a lesbian. And yeah, I know how you feel.



29:51

Okay. We're talking with Kay Harper and Jeff Mackay from the gay and lesbian switchboard in Houston. Their number is 5293211 And we'll be back in just a few minutes. Meanwhile, if you're thinking about wanting to get involved in the community thinking about rising up and going to some gay and lesbian switchboard training, we'll be back in just a few minutes



30:17

and Jeff Mackay, of the gay lesbian switchboard.



30:20

...

Hi again, hi. Hi. Hi.



30:23

Rise up, rise up. Yeah. Okay. So anyway, so tell me what exactly we can expect from training next week.



30:36

What you can expect is, goodness, what can you expect, I don't know how to how to some training up and just a couple of words. It's, it's a lot of work, but it's a lot of fun, you're going to find out some things about yourself, you probably didn't know, you're gonna find out a whole lot about the community that you probably didn't know, you know, the fact that there are 100 different organizations in town that you can can refer people to that there's more than just five bars on the corner of Pacific and grant. I'm



31:20

learning a lot of new ways of dealing with people and meet a lot of new people. Both switchboard vols, not only the training team, but we have other volunteers from the switchboard involved along the way, as well as the other, the other members of the class. So it's a good way to meet new people as well.



31:43

And training once again is going to be



31:45

it starts Friday night, January 10. And it's Saturday and Sunday, the 11th and 12th. And then the following Saturday and Sunday, the 18th and 19th.



31:54

And if you want to sign up the number you gotta call is 5293211. Have to call switchboard. Right. So what other exciting things are going on at the switchboard right now? Well, we



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have just started. I hate crimes line, as



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32:11

a lot about that. Yeah. So if we still give it to you?



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Well, it's it's still fairly new, we haven't done a whole lot with it. But what it is, it is set up to be a place to record information on hate crimes, gay and lesbian hate crimes. It was something that has been talked about for a while. But the great deal of the growth came out of the murders this summer, was we wanted a place to coordinate the data and collect the data. So that



32:53

there's a real need to make sure that the data is is out there. There are some people who might be hesitant to call the police, for instance, in that case, and we need to make sure that the data is that the data is available even from from various sources that what what we collect can fit in with the records police have and also can become a part of the hate crimes data collection on a national level.



33:26

Yeah, it'll the information will also it all the stuff from gay lesbian hate crimes are going to the National Gay and Lesbian taskforce as well as to the FBI. Who are the people who are collecting the stats for the whole entire hate crimes thing. And the Gay and Lesbian Task Force is sort of keeping an eye on it, to make sure that number seem to change a lot, especially when things are connected to hate crimes or to gay and lesbian issues. Right. And they're going to provide sort of a backup to check that the numbers that get published are the numbers that were actually sent to the FBI and to the government collecting agencies. But what it is, is we have a separate line that is strictly for the reporting of hate crimes.



34:25

Is it on yet? Yes.



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It's been on how



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what's the number How is it handled?



24:22



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It is the number is 5299615. And basically at this point, what it is is you will get a switchboard volunteer who will ask you if ask you questions. If there is not a volunteer available, there will be a machine on and you can leave a message there. And we'll call you back