



public radio's
LGBTQ youth programs



GLSEN LOWER HUDSON VALLEY TO HONOR PUBLIC RADIO PIONEER MARC SOPHOS, CROTON-ON-HUDSON TEACHER JESSICA BUTTS & YORKTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT JULIA WHALEN

As LGBTQ+ Youth are Being Attacked in the Classroom by Political Opportunists, GLSEN Highlights Those Who Have Made Comprehensive and Welcoming Curriculum a Foundation of their Work

YORKTOWN HEIGHTS, N.Y. – May 10, 2022 – The [GLSEN Lower Hudson Valley Chapter](#), which is part of GLSEN, Inc., the leading national education organization working to create safe and inclusive K-12 schools for LGBTQ+ youth will hold its 24th Annual Leadership Awards event on May 19th via Zoom. The chapter, which covers Westchester, Putnam, and Rockland counties, will be honoring three individuals who have made an incredible impact on our LGBTQ+ youth.

Honoree **Marc Sophos** is the creator and producer of OutCasting Media, which creates public radio's LGBTQ youth programs. Marc began working in radio at the age of ten. His effort to establish a new public radio station in Westchester began a few years later, in 1973, and eventually succeeded 20 years later with the establishment of WDFH Westchester Public Radio, which served unmet arts, cultural, and news interests of the suburban communities north of New York City.

In 2011, Marc started OutCasting as a local LGBTQ youth program on WDFH. As the station was winding up its operations in 2013, he made arrangements to transition for national network distribution for OutCasting. This redirection has enabled the program to reach many more listeners than was possible when the program was aired only on WDFH: it is now carried on more than 50 public radio stations. A second program, "OutCasting Overtime," reaches listeners on some 200 public radio stations.

OutCasting and OutCasting Overtime are the only nationally distributed LGBTQ youth programs on public radio in the United States. The programs focus on LGBTQ issues as seen from the perspectives of student broadcasters, providing in-depth analysis of complicated topics that are rarely covered properly in the mainstream press, let alone in classrooms.

Through his work as creator and producer of OutCasting, Marc, who came out as gay in his late thirties, is giving back to our youth. He has developed a unique curriculum for OutCasting's young broadcasters – mainly high school and college students who identify as LGBTQ or straight allies. These student broadcasters learn radio journalism, interview techniques, research, writing and speaking for broadcast, editing, and studio operations, and put all of those skills into practice in the ongoing creation of OutCasting.

"I am so proud to be honored by an organization as vital to our LGBTQ youth as GLSEN," Marc said.

“Our work at OutCasting brings together the different threads of my life, and I’m very fortunate to be able to provide an environment for today’s youth that could have done so much good for me when I was young. It’s unbelievably rewarding.”

GLSEN Lower Hudson Valley is also honoring Pierre Van Cortland Middle School health teacher **Jessica Butts**. Jessica has been thoughtfully teaching about sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in her classroom for years. She was instrumental in ensuring her Croton-on Hudson middle school brought in GLSEN as an educational partner and has been leading workshops for health teachers through the Putnam-Northern Westchester BOCES. Her courageous approach to health education is both life-affirming and lifesaving. A parent of three children, Jessica believes health education is a vital component of a child’s educational experience that can enable and empower them to be happy, productive, and confident young people.

The third honoree is Yorktown Heights high school student **Julia Whalen**, who created and moderated [four panels for her faith community](#) in northern Westchester. The panels focus on LGBTQ+ history, politics, and law – complemented by first person stories and experiences. The program, built out entirely on her own with the support of her family and the Good Shepherd Rector and Vestry, will conclude with a vote to raise the pride flag over the church this June.

A member of the Gay-Straight Alliance, Julia is also a fearless advocate challenging the censorship of LGBTQ+ focused books in area schools. She has appeared on television educating the public about the harmful effects anti-LGBTQ+ policies can have on young people.

MJ Karger, Co-Chair of GLSEN Lower Hudson Valley said, “We could not be more proud than to honor Marc Sophos, Jessica Butts, and Julia Whalen. They are people who truly embody our mission of making K-12 learning safe for all children, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.”

The evening’s keynote speaker will be **Eliza Byard**, PhD, co-founder and Senior Advisor of The Campaign for Our Shared Future, a non-partisan, common-ground effort dedicated to the idea that every child deserves an inclusive, meaningful education that supports their health, learning, and success in life. Eliza is a global expert on LGBTQ+ issues in K-12 education and youth development and served as Executive Director of GLSEN from 2008-2021. During her tenure, GLSEN’s work spurred a significant decline in anti-LGBTQ+ harassment and violence in United States schools. In 2009, Eliza launched GLSEN’s international research initiative in partnership with UNESCO, providing new access to decision-making tables at the UN and the World Bank for LGBTQ+ education advocates worldwide.

GLSEN Lower Hudson Valley will honor Marc, Jessica, and Julia on Thursday, May 19th at 6:30pm. **Those interested in attending this Zoom event can register by clicking [here](#).**

Previous honorees include leaders such as Adrian Shanker, Executive Director of The Spahr Center, which serves Marin County, California’s LGBTQ+ and HIV communities. Adrian founded and led Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center in Allentown Pennsylvania. He currently serves on the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS in the Biden-Harris Administration, and previously served as Health Committee Co-Chair of the Pennsylvania Commission on LGBTQ Affairs in Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf’s administration.

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About GLSEN Lower Hudson Valley

GLSEN Lower Hudson Valley is a grassroots initiative, working across Westchester, Putnam, and Rockland Counties to ensure safe schools for all students, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. There are 43 Chapters around the country doing this important work. Join us today.

The chapter supports students and educators locally, organizes around LGBTQ-affirming public policy, plans teacher trainings, and hosts events for students, educators, parents, and allies. Chapters play an important role in bringing GLSEN's programs and visions to right where we live, work, and learn. While some chapters have full-time or part-time staff, most are entirely volunteer-based.

<https://www.glsen.org/chapter/lower-hudson-valley>

About Media for the Public Good (MFPG) and OutCasting

Based in New York, MFPG is an independent non-profit public media organization that produces OutCasting and OutCasting Overtime, public radio's LGBTQ youth programs. The programs are available online at OutCastingMedia.org, on major podcast sites, and on public radio stations. They are distributed to stations through the Pacifica Radio Network and PRX (the Public Radio Exchange). OutCasting is 29 minutes long and covers LGBTQ issues in depth. It is heard on more than 50 public radio stations under its own name and as a regular contributor to the Pacifica program Sprouts: Radio from the Grassroots. OutCasting Overtime, a series of shorter, often commentary-based pieces, is also a regular contributor to the LGBT program This Way Out, heard on more than 200 stations. Both programs are released monthly. All episodes of OutCasting, as well as related programs, videos, press coverage, and other information, are available at OutCastingMedia.org. MFPG was previously named Hudson Valley Community Radio, and from 1995 to 2013, it owned and operated WDFH Westchester Public Radio, just north of New York City.

outcastingmedia.org