

2023 IMPACT REPORT

LOVE IS Love

An evening of self-expression, hope and love.



UnityPoint Health
Meriter Foundation

UWHealth



A HEARTFELT THANK YOU



Thank you for supporting LGBTQ+ youth in our community by being a part of Love is Love 2023. Your involvement directly supports a safe, supportive, accepting and non-judgmental environment at Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (CAP) at UnityPoint Health - Meriter, where kids are free to be themselves; where they are seen for the beautiful, incredible young humans they are; where they can heal and learn skills to cope with challenges they may be experiencing.

Kids in our community-of every identity, background and lived experience-deserve access to compassionate and supportive care. That is truly what Love is Love is about.

Thank you for opening your hearts. Your generosity is helping change lives and save lives.

Sincerely,

Katie Schmitt, MD
Medical Director, UnityPoint Health - Meriter
Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

On February 3, 2023, you showed up to support LGBTQ+ youth in a BIG way!

669
tickets sold

\$321,756
(donations raised)

YOUR SUPPORT...

Increased access to mental health care for kids in our community

At times, over 50% of CAP patients identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, including those who are working to understand their sexual identity and/or use nonbinary pronouns (such as they/them). You've eliminated barriers and helped them reach a safe space by providing transportation vouchers.



Expanded resources for patients

Your gift purchased gender-affirming resources like chest binders, TransTape, pronoun pins, clothing, patient resource kits and books that convey a powerful message of support and acceptance to our patients.



Hired additional caregivers

Behavioral health therapists who specialize in LGBTQ+ affirming care recently joined the CAP team to lead weekly group sessions where LGBTQ+ patients can openly discuss their experiences, challenges and concerns, fostering a sense of belonging and community to help them on their healing journey.

Provided advanced training for healthcare workers

Every team member at CAP must complete a training course with the verbiage, clinical tools and strategies to effectively support our LGBTQ+ patients.



THE EVENING AT A GLANCE



The night began with the smooth vocals of Marc Lopez followed by a friendly welcome from our energetic emcees, Baltazar De Anda Santana, Executive Director of the Latino Academy of Workforce Development, and Abby Swetz, Communications Director at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

We listened as Katie Schmitt, MD shared the realities of the mental health struggles our LGBTQ+ youths are facing before being filled with hope as Damian Bock shared his inspirational story.



“Just after the pandemic...we all had to go back to school. My anxiety and depression related to gender dysphoria started to get out of control...By the spring of 2021, I was suicidal and ended up in UnityPoint Health - Meriter's Emergency Department for intervention. I felt totally buried and hopeless.

When you're dealing with queer issues it can feel isolating and like no one else will understand. **A community is better than just one person alone, and CAP at Meriter provided a community for me.** They provided it at a time I really needed it. It's also amazing to be standing here, in front of all of you, knowing this is my community too. Thank you for being here tonight and supporting kids like me.”

Damian Bock

Excerpt from Love is Love 2023 speech



Guests danced the night away thanks to the musical stylings of DJ Christopher Vasquez.

Our Love is Love event co-founders, John Sims (Chair) and Tina Noel, thanked attendees and sponsors for their incredible, life-saving support.

The evening concluded with a dazzling drag show by Bianca Lynn Breeze, Nia Chanel Sadora Sanchez, Nemo and Wynter da Bratt.

Meaningful moments throughout the evening were captured by Melanie Renee Photography.

To view the full photo gallery, **visit bit.ly/lil2023photos**

“ I never had the support I needed when I was a gay youth. Fortunately, I had a family who supported me when I came out later in life. If I had the resources we present to youth today, I think my life would be a bit different. When I was asked to help create a small piece of this event, I knew I needed to give back and help with such a great cause. ”

Bianca Lynn Breeze

Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway declared
February 3, 2023 as Love is Love Day



"We are better people and a stronger community when all people are given the opportunity to live their lives as their true selves"

"[We] are committed to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ youth through compassionate, sexuality- and gender-affirming mental health care"

"Our youth are charting a new and exciting course, pushing the boundaries of how we think about and understand gender and sexuality"



SAVE
THE
DATE

Love is Love
2025

Saturday, February 15th, 2025
Overture Center for the Arts

Scan for more
information:



THANK YOU TO OUR LEADING ADVOCATES:

RED SPONSORS:

The Arora Family
W. Jerome Frautschi Foundation



Dan & Patti Rashke (TASC)
Family Foundation

GREEN SPONSORS:

Anonymous
Sean Blum & Amy Flesch
Essential Health LLC
Marla & Larry Frank
Rich & Mary Lynch
Summit Credit Union
Veridian Homes Foundation

Custer Burish
Financial Services
Event Essentials
Hooper Foundation
Spartan Day Camp
Tri-North Builders

ORANGE SPONSORS:

Nathan & Sarah Herbst



Jim & Jessica Yehle

BLUE EVENT HOSTS:

Leigh Arora
Assumption Greek
Orthodox Church
Chuck Bauer & Chuck Beckwith
Bell Laboratories
Carbliss
Carex Consulting Group
Chas Martin Team-Sprinkman
Real Estate
Cresa
Adam Erdmann & Shawn Langel
Micaelen Freeman
Matt & Tori Gerding
Group Health Cooperative of South
Central Wisconsin
Peter & Nancy Gunder
Tim & Mary Horkan
Gabe Javier
Valerie & Andreas Kazamias
Lindsey & Jeremy Leick
Dr. Bradley & Susan Manning
Tina Noel
Keri Peterson
The Pyle Foundation
RED Sushi
Rico Sabatini
Susan Toth, M.D. & Nancy Peirce

PURPLE EVENT HOSTS:

Affordable Dental Care
Anesis Therapy
Balisle Family Law
Legal Counsel, S.C.
Darrell & Michelle Behnke
Elizabeth Cardinale & Jason Dalton
Mark Francisco
Nancy Francisco-Welke
Jac & Edith Garner
Kristopher Gasch & Shane Burkart
Terry Haller
Kate Heaney
Levy Giving Fund
Stephanie Mader
Rebecca Madson
Jeanne Myers
OPEN - Out Professional
Engagement Network
Paul Polster
Beth Prestine
Robert & Judi Rubin
Soha Diamond Co.
Nick & Judy Topitzes
Beau Williams & Alysha Kubsh
Wisconsin LGBT
Chamber of Commerce

YELLOW SPONSORS:

Exact Sciences
J.H. Findorff & Sons
Matt & Laurel Frazer
Ginny Graves & Peter Tropman
Bill Linton
Metcalf's Market
Northwestern Mutual
Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation
Radiance Spa
John Sims
SVA
TASC

HONORARY CHAIRS: James & Missy Arnett, Shiva Bidar, Valerie & Andreas Kazamias, Katie Schmitt, MD, John Sims, Nikki & Asa Stafford, Jim & Jessica Yehle

PLANNING COMMITTEE: Diego Campoverde, Adam Erdmann, Nancy Francisco-Welke, Gabe Javier, Valerie Kazamias, Marcos Lozano, Tina Noel, Darcy Pinasco, Katie Schmitt, MD, John Sims (Chair)