

Elizabeth Balcom - Individual Hero

Through her selfless leadership of the local chapter of the Human Rights Campaign, also known as HRC, Liz Balcom has been a hero for the LGBTQIA+ community of Greater Philadelphia.

For the past six years, Liz has been a dedicated volunteer for the Greater Philadelphia chapter of the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest LGBTQ+ advocacy group and lobbying organization. Liz has stepped up when needed - she's been Chair of the Greater Philadelphia HRC Steering Committee, member of the HRC National Board of Governors, and Corporate Co-Chair for the Philadelphia HRC Committee.

Liz works in the office of Alumni Relations and Development at Bryn Mawr College, and the work she does is intensive, far beyond 9 to 5 and very detail focused. Additionally, Liz has extended her advocacy work through her job, as she most certainly focuses on inclusiveness in her work at Bryn Mawr.

Regardless of her workload at the College, Liz never skips a beat when it comes to her work with HRC, advocating for the LGBTQ+ community in the Greater Philadelphia Area.

For that, we proudly present the Individual Hero Award to Elizabeth Balcom.

Philly AIDS Thrift

Philly AIDS Thrift is a non-profit retail thrift store whose mission is to support those affected by HIV/AIDS by selling the lovely, useful, interesting, amusing, and sometimes mysterious stuff generous people donate. Since its founding in 2005, the organization has raised and given away more than three million dollars to programs that are focused on the prevention, outreach, research and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS. Just this year, Philly AIDS Thrift awarded twenty-four organizations \$200,000 in grant money to support their much needed service projects.

In 2014 Philly AIDS Thrift opened an HIV testing site in store where they partner with four local HIV organizations that provide free rapid HIV screenings. In that same year, Philly AIDS Thrift brought Giovanni's Room —

the longest running LGBT bookstore in the United States — under their nonprofit umbrella. This allowed them to preserve and continue the legacy of Giovanni's Room while also raising additional funds to support their mission. This new venture is called Philly AIDS Thrift @ Giovanni's Room and continues to sell LGBTQ books as well as clothing, records, and art.

Philly AIDS Thrift believes that we can see the end of HIV/AIDS in this lifetime. Your commitment to our mission makes our work possible.

Mary Gay Scanlon

Per her endorsement from the Human Rights Campaign, “As an attorney, Mary Gay Scanlon fought tirelessly for the LGBTQ community, working to promote inclusion and acceptance in Pennsylvania and across the country”.

In her position with the Philadelphia law firm, Ballard Sparh, she worked pro bono on marriage equality research projects and counseled athletic organizations on inclusion practices and transgender policies. She also provided pro bono work challenging discriminatory definitions of marriage, and offered legal representation for transgender individuals seeking to change their names.

Her love and support of LGBTQ people and issues is truly life long and personal for her. She was there to support her sister who was serving in the Army and had to deal with the discriminatory policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. She has used her skills and compassion to be a great ally to many individuals for many years.

As a U.S. congresswoman, elected in 2018, she continues to be a tremendous ally. She has hired an openly gay man to be her chief of staff. She enthusiastically joined the important LGBT Equality Caucus and signed on as a co-sponsor of the Equality Act, legislation that will provide full legal civil rights protections to the LGBTQ community. And, she will positively impact the lives of LGBTQ persons in all aspects of her congressional influence, including as the Vice Chair of the Judiciary Committee and as a member of the House Rules Committee.

Cisele Fetterman

"Gisele's mother brought her and her brother from Brazil when they were young children. Her mom worked long hours cleaning houses, and they got support from food banks and thrift stores to start building their lives. Their neighbors across the hall from their apartment - two gay couples - checked in on the kids - making sure they had dinner and loving them like they were a family. The kindness and care she felt at that young age laid the foundation for her to be a hero for immigrants, LGBTQ communities and other underserved groups in her life...For example, in 2007, she saw a magazine article about Braddock, a steel town just outside Pittsburgh that had lost most of its population and where more than one-third of residents - mostly black - live below the poverty line. She wrote to the Braddock government to tell them about the work she had been doing to redistribute gently used items - giving back in the same way she and her mother and brother had benefited years earlier. The city's mayor John Fetterman responded and they married in 2008. As her work grew, she asked John for a shipping container, which they put on an abandoned lot in 2012. Local artists painted it and the Free Store was created, a volunteer-run organization that simply receives surplus and donated goods and redistributes them free to local families in need with no questions asked, including many from the LGBTQ community. Several more free stores opened across the state. Also, Gisele expanded her work to launch 412 Food Rescue, which saves and redistributes millions of pounds of food across Allegheny county. And she also launched For Good PGH, which has an array of initiatives including a women-owned business incubator. The Pittsburgh City Paper, not surprisingly, named her Best Activist in 2017. Then she became the SLOP in 2009 - an acronym she embraces. She said, "I want Pennsylvania to be a safe, just, and more welcoming place for everyone. I want everyone to have an opportunity to thrive in our state." That's why she has done interviews with LGBTQ news outlets in Pittsburgh.. That's why she has invited LGBTQ groups to swim in the pool at the state house instead of keeping it to her own family... That's why she and John showed up at Reading Pride in 2019 to support folks who demanded that the pride flag be raised at the request of local citizens... And that's why she supports John hanging the pride flag outside our capital state house even if the gerrymandered majority of Republicans don't like it. Gisele also is part of our community, wearing and posting on her social media channels pictures of herself in shirts that say things like Not Just Bilingual. The Free Store continues its work, which is needed now more than ever in the pandemic,

making home deliveries when necessary - of everything from masks, to food, to naran to help save the lives of those who are struggling more than ever during the pandemic. Overall, she says she believes in letting love lead... which is probably the reason why she asked for no charges against a woman who called her a racial slur in the parking lot of a grocery store recently. Instead she asked for social services intervention to help the woman break the cycle of hate. That's a level of grace that only true heroes have."

Tavern Group

Since they opened the doors, Tavern On Camac has been a safe space for all people. No matter race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomics - all of the spaces created by Stephen Carlino and Dennis Fee have been safe for all.

Years later, The Tavern Group owns and operates a group of warm, inclusive establishments in Philadelphia - Tavern On Camac and Ubar in the Gayborhood, and Otto's Taproom in Brewerytown.

Their inclusive commitment goes far beyond their establishments. The company steadfastly supports charitable organizations that hold up the values of the broadest spectrum of LGBTQ+. It is an honor for us to present the 2021 Local Business Hero Award to the Tavern Group.

Tia Sadler

When you think of the term HERO you think of honoring someone who has lived for several decades. Unfortunately, that's not the reality of most people of color, particularly if they identify as Gay or Trans. Black Trans Women are targeted and become victims of violent crimes more than any other minority. Most don't live to become fully adult. So their Achievement is making it through every waking day. By the time Tia could walk, they danced, pointed their toes and would twirl around the house for hours. This was a delightful vision for their mother, but not for a cruel society that would harm them. Tia, was horribly bullied, brutally beaten and hospitalized by the time they were eight years old. Their teacher repeatedly told them that they wouldn't live to be 15 because Tia was black and feminine. She's now a 26 years old College Grad, and a Research Assistant at UPenn. Tia is an out trans woman who has

struggled with the trauma of childhood bullying and abuse. Tia has contemplated suicide numerous times. The painful truth is, not much has changed in society when people turn a blind eye to the effects of bullying and abuse to black people. Tia is the Visionary behind FSP Against Bullying - a Philadelphia based non-profit. The mission is to support bullying victims (children and adults) through programs and resources by working alongside community based organizations with anti-bullying initiatives or campaigns. FSP Against Bullying has supported countless individuals and families who have been victims of bullying or abuse since it was founded in 2015. Their motto: 'Everyone Deserves to Feel Safe'. I proudly present the DVLF Youth Hero award to Tia Sadler.

Radical Therapy Group

Radical Therapy Center provides trauma informed, client-centered services and products that have an intentional anti-oppression lens. RTC transforms the typical therapeutic space that only functionally meets their clients' basic needs into an empowering environment that cultivates community. RTC supports clients and communities to reach new levels of resilience, healing, and pleasure through carefully curated training and workshops.

Co-founders Khalida and Sonalee dreamt of creating a soothing, therapeutic space where their marginalized clientele could find highly-skilled community members of color and LGBTQ+ members to guide them through their healing. All of their therapists attend regular training on cutting edge topics like anarchist therapy and anti-oppressive facilitation to be sure they are using the most radical approaches to address the ways their clients are surviving systems of domination like white supremacy, colonialism, and racialized capitalism.

DVLF is proud to present our Local Business HERO award to Radical Therapy Center.

Stonewall Sports PHL

Stonewall Sports Philly's Mission Statement states that their aim is to provide a safe space for members to build a community where participants can have fun and make new friends while playing sports, either as new players or veteran players. Stonewall Sports Philly has committed itself to support the

Philadelphia LGBTQ+ community through charitable donations, community service, and education while providing recreational sport, educational and social events where all participants and spectators feel comfortable and safe. Over the past year, Stonewall Sports Philly has taken numerous initiatives - one to create an education committee, one to create a diversity and inclusion committee, and one to create an events and social committee. The Board, along with these new Committees, are working to ensure that Stonewall Sports Philadelphia is open, accessible, and welcoming to all new and potential members in our local community. The organization has proven itself an amazing social network for Philly's LGBTQ+ folks to meet and make new friends. Most importantly, Stonewall Sports helps people feel connected to their community. We are also excited to see how barriers are broken down as we emerge from the solitude and stress caused by the pandemic.

Murray Archibald

Murray Archibald is an artist and co-founder (along with longtime CAMP Rehoboth Executive Director, co-founder, and husband Steve Elkins) of CAMP Rehoboth. He has served the organization in many ways since its creation in 1991. From 1993-2018 he was President of the Board of Directors of CAMP Rehoboth. He served as Creative Director, and following Steve's death, as Editor in Chief of *Letters from CAMP Rehoboth*, and Executive Director of CAMP Rehoboth. He is co-founder and producer of the annual Sundance Benefit. He is a past President of Sussex County AIDS Council, and has served as Lay Leader of Epworth United Methodist Church. He is currently a member of the Board of Directors of the Rehoboth Beach Historical Society. In 2013 Murray and Steve were awarded the Order of the First State by Governor Jack Markell.

Denise Cohen

Denise Cohen has been working in Philadelphia since 1981. By 1989, she was managing Hepburn's Nightclub - one of the first "lesbian" spaces in the city. She continued at Hepburns until 1996, when she opened Sister's Nightclub as General Manager under the ownership of Mel Heifetz. Denise ran a bar for everyone - women, men and trans people across the cultural and

socioeconomic spectrum. Sadly, the building was sold in August 2013. Her 17+ years providing Sisters as a safe space for women especially is an amazing achievement. Soon after the closing of Sisters, Cohen ventured onto Toasted Walnut, a new space for women. And while the space was opened with lesbian women in mind, Cohen made sure that everyone felt comfortable in the space. Denise has also been responsible for some fabulous LGBTQ+ events, including dance parties aboard the Mosholu. We honor her for her almost 40 years of service to Philadelphia's LGBTQ+ community.