

Dear Community Services Committee,

Thank you very much to the committee and staff for recommending OutReach for continued funding for the next funding cycle. This means OutReach can continue offering supportive services to people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and/or Transgender in the Madison area.

I came to OutReach two years ago as a Master's level Social Work intern eager to help support and empower those who through no fault of their own identify in a community (the LGBT community) who still to this day face oppression, isolation, and fear on a daily basis. I am a straight ally and I wanted to do all I could to help create some positive change in someone's life; to help someone experience a life that I, as a straight person, take for granted.

Most of the clients who utilize OutReach's services on a daily basis are facing homelessness, unemployment, and various mental health issues, to name a few. Gary Hollander, Executive Director of Diverse & Resilient, a Statewide LGBT health organization, has said this when describing the factors that may affect an LGBT person's general wellbeing "LGBT people are more likely than the general population to have health issues and less likely than the general population to have the resources to address those issues." This can also be described as Minority Stress. Minority Stress a theory used to explain that an environment of stigma, prejudice, and discrimination can create a hostile and stressful social environment that causes mental health issues in people who identify as LGBT. With the funding provided by the City, we can continue to offer such valuable resources that help empower and enrich a person's life so they have the tools available to change their own life for the better.

Direct quote from Rose F., who has been a client of OutReach for several years: "OutReach to me have provided a safe place to be me and find a support group, the community computers they offer to use helped me find other resources, housing and kept me in touch with people I would otherwise lost connection with. They have also made available my ability to give back to my community and a chance to enlighten people to my world living as a transsexual."

Comment from Cait R., a volunteer of OutReach for a year and a half: During my time at OutReach, I have been blessed with the opportunity of being able to offer support and resources to people who often have nowhere else to go. I feel privileged knowing that I have made an impact on someone's day, or even life. My fondest memory is of a caller who told me I was an angel for listening and providing them with resources they greatly needed."

Thank you,

Angie Rehling
Program Director of OutReach, Inc.