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## Pink Powerhouse

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## The Center's LGBT resources are truly impressive

By Beth Phaner

Where in Long Beach can you find Drag Queen Bingo, free HIV testing, social chat groups, a free cyber center, and an LGBT lending library all under one roof? If you guessed The Center Long Beach, you are correct. Housed in an old bank building on East Fourth Street, The Center has been providing all these services, plus many additional programs and opportunities to the LGBT community for nearly 35 years.

As operations manager at The Center, Porter Gilberg derives a great deal of satisfaction that comes from helping to shape, grow and participate in the LGBT community. With a B.A. in Women's Studies from UCLA and an M.A. in Applied Women's Studies from Claremont Graduate University, Gilberg started out volunteering at The Center as an undergrad intern, and she found the experience so rewarding that she never left. After four years, Gilberg stepped into her current role, and it seems like a natural fit for this community activist who has called Long Beach home for the last eight years.

"It's been absolutely wonderful getting to know all of our volunteers and community members who come into The Center every day," says Gilberg. "Every day is like spending a day with my own family."

Whether you're seeking gay-friendly housing or medical care, or interested in joining one of the social groups or networking with peers, or in need of health education assistance, legal assistance or HIV testing, The Center has something to offer everyone. The nonprofit organization is always looking for new opportunities and programs to bring to the community, too. A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Questioning (LGBTQ) speaker series is set to begin in June and will continue through the end of the year on a variety of topics, including LGBTQ history, culture, academics and arts. The Center also plans to host an LGBT Parents Mixer on June 13. Additionally, it will be holding its annual QFilms Festival in September and submissions are currently open for this long-running film festival.

As with all small nonprofits that have struggled with funding during the economic downturn, The Center is always looking for creative ways to offer and expand its services on a contracted budget.

"Our Red Carpet Oscar Screening Party was very successful, and we hope our Bingo Fundraiser at Executive Suite on May 15 will be a smash, too," notes Gilberg. "We're also about to launch our 2011 Center Membership drive where community members receive discounts at local businesses for a small annual donation."

The Long Beach Pride Parade & Festival set for May 21-22, one of the most exciting times of the year for the organization. The Center will maintain a large presence that weekend.



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"Between the Pink Party on Friday, helping out the Festival over the weekend and marching along with our Big Red Bus during the Parade on Sunday, there's simply too much excitement for us to put into words," says Gilbert. "Every year in May the spotlight is on the Long Beach LGBT community, and we're just proud to be part of the action."

The Center's facility, along with the extent of programs and events offered by the organization is truly impressive, and it's available to everyone—you don't have to be a member of the LGBT community to take advantage of its many services.

"We invite anyone interested in our programs and services to call, email or stop by to find out how they can get involved," says Gilberg. "We'd love to give anyone who stops in a tour of the facility and share a little bit of our history."

The Center Long Beach, 2017 E., Fourth St., (562) 434-4455; [www.centerib.org](http://www.centerib.org).

## HERE TO HELP

Looking for more LGBT resources? Here's a sampling of other places that address our concerns and needs:



### The Long Beach Community Business Network

P.O. Box 21462

(562) 590-0908

[www.lbcbn.com](http://www.lbcbn.com)

### Cal State Long Beach LGBTRC Student Resource Center

Faculty Office Building 4 (FO4)

USU-215

1250 Bellflower Blvd.

(562) 995-4966

[www.csulb.edu/divisiona/students/sld/student\\_resource\\_centers/lgbtrc/](http://www.csulb.edu/divisiona/students/sld/student_resource_centers/lgbtrc/)

### Long Beach PFLAG

425 Coronado Ave., #281

(562) 773-9801

[www.ocpflag.org](http://www.ocpflag.org)

### Bienestar

525 E. 7<sup>th</sup> St.

(562) 682-9687

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Long Beach may settle sex offender's legal claim - Long Beach Press-Telegram

CSULB gets new dean of the arts - Long Beach Press-Telegram

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