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A renewed spirit at The Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Greater Long Beach

The Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Greater Long Beach has lots of reasons to celebrate. 30 years of providing programs and services, successful events and fundraisers, a plethora of volunteers, new collaborations with agencies, organizations and businesses, with several new and returning additions to its Board of Directors, with Tom Leary and Brad Shore being two of the most recent to accept the invitation.

"We have a fantastic board. They are passionate, motivated, and highly skilled. It is great to have Brad back as well. He brings a lot to the table, and we are thrilled to work with him again in this capacity," claimed Woods, Executive Director. Brad Shore was on the Board of Directors at the Center from 2001 to 2003 as Development Chair. In addition, Brad has been involved locally by being on the steering committee for the LB/OC chapter of HRC, the steering committee for AIDS Walk, and he is also the founder and organizer of the "Sunday Brunch Bunch," a social group for the gay community. Additionally, Brad was the founder and co-chair of the LAX chapter of GLEAM, Gay & Lesbian Employees at American Airlines. Brad currently works in private practice as a licensed Clinical Hypnotherapist in Long Beach.

"I am excited about rejoining The Center's Board of Directors and my goal is to help expand programs and assist with the current Membership Drive. I am happy to belong to an organization that is celebrating its 30th anniversary in Long Beach, and it is my privilege to help The Center grow and prosper. Other new board members have also joined including, Tom Leary; who has lived in Long Beach for the past 20 years and has been employed by the City of Long Beach for the past 17. Leary has had strong roots and commitment to the community over the years and has often visited and taken advantage of the many unique services provided by the Center. "I know first hand how valuable the Center is for Long Beach and surrounding communities," stated Leary.

In the fall of 2007, Leary co-founded the City of Long Beach's first gLBts (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and supportive employees association). Its mission is to work for equality for all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees and to eliminate discrimination through innovative partnerships, philanthropy, mentoring, advocacy, education and outreach programs.

"While working on the formation of gLBts I had the pleasure of being introduced to Kimberlee Woods the Center's Executive Director. I knew instantly that we'd develop a strong friendship

and working partnership that would be of tremendous benefit to both our organizations and the Long Beach community,” claimed Leary.

Tom Leary was appointed to the Center’s Board in January of this year and could not be happier. “There are several board members like myself who are new, but we have a nice safety net provided by those members who have served for several years as well as those who have moved on and yet remain committed and in touch,” Leary adds. Woods also states, “It provides an atmosphere for support and opportunity to grow.”

With today’s headline news announcing that there is a recession coming our way, nonprofit organizations are bracing themselves for the changes they will face. These changes will possibly involve making difficult decisions regarding staff, finances and the types of services they will provide. The Center has had its share of dealing with difficult decisions, but we are optimistic about a successful future, which will be led by a strong Board of Directors who have made a commitment to bring in to the agency ten to fifteen thousand dollars a year through various avenues, recruit up to five new Center Members per month and bring in two to three new potential leads with regards to sponsorship or donors each year. “As we move forward, our number one priority is to keep our commitment to serve our community by providing quality programs and services with the utmost professionalism,” stated Israel Rodriguez, Board Chair.

Other board members include Israel Rodriguez (Chair, Wells Fargo), Ann Garrett (CFO, Wells Fargo), Dr. Carrie Rickard (Secretary, Long Beach Memorial), Raul A. Añorve (General, Los Angeles City Attorney’s Office) Christopher Johnson (General, Wells Fargo), Jason Guerra, Esq. (General, Sullivan & Ballog, LLP).

Kimberlee Woods, along with the Board of Directors, are working on enhancing relationships with key funding sources, earning the financial respect of the community, and entering into partnerships with public and private agencies to enhance and grow the services to the community. “We hope this approach will bring back many long-time supporters to the Center and restore community faith in the good work that The Center has been providing for 30 years,” claims Woods. The Center Long Beach, “It’s your place.”