

Farewell, Sincere thanks and Much Success to you all...

As I look back at the last two years as Board Chair/President and the 4 years prior as an LGBTQ Center Board member, I remember this time with a smile, many, many tears and a renewed commitment to our community.

I'm smiling because I was fortunate to see the true humanity and commitment from employees that work at The Center and that volunteer every day to make someone's life a little easier, a little healthier and more connected. The COVID-19 pandemic opened our eyes to conditions in our community that we might not have realized before this, like our older adult population being shuttered in their homes and not having access to nutritional meals. We found community members completely isolated from other human beings, dealing with depression, loneliness and food instability. And we heard over again that some of our youth were dealing with social distancing in environments that were not supportive or affirming of their identities and placing them at risk for abuse and violent situations. This was extremely distressing for Center staff that work every day to provide positive, safe and affirming social connections for these individuals.

The world changed...and so we pivoted. Example: I am so proud that The Center was able to partner with the City of Long Beach during the start of the pandemic to feed approximately 800 Older Adults on a weekly basis. And our employees made sure to keep in touch with these same folks so that they had regular contact with caring human beings. Finally, we moved from in-person support groups and services to virtual connections and our community was extremely grateful for this effort.

I am so proud of our courageous staff that stuck through the pandemic, and through events that challenged us both within and outside of The Center. Just recently we relaunched a Building Committee to address our outgrowing the 4<sup>th</sup> Street building, which happened even before the pandemic and before remote work assignments were in place. We want to ensure that The Center provides a healthy environment for our staff and clients, and is not limited to a location near downtown, but with a presence in disadvantaged communities that don't have equitable access to our services.

We grew as a board and we made a commitment to ensure that our programs and services were available to more community members, and that our board represented new neighborhoods and clients. And our current and new board members are moving and shaking to help us achieve this goal.

My tenure as Board Chair/President ends this year but not my involvement and support. I will be Co-Chairing the Black & White Ball with my spouse, Pinky and I will work with organizations throughout the city to build more cohesiveness in how we support our community members. There is nothing that we can't do when we work together...and the last two years is proof of this.

A Sincere Thank You to all that work at The LGBTQ Center Long Beach. I wish you all the success in the world and I hope that you and our community members will support our new Board Chair/President John Newall as he takes on this important role.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stella Ursua". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Stella Ursua

2020-2022 Board Chair/President  
The LGBTQ Center Long Beach