

---

## Legacy walk to transform Halsted Street into a walking museum

*by Carrie Maxwell, Windy City Times*

2011-06-08

With Pride month upon us comes more news from the Legacy Project. This walking museum along a half-mile stretch of Halsted Street showcasing biographies of notable LGBT people across history will take shape with a Gala Luncheon in October of this year and a dedication to take place on Oct. 11, 2012, National Coming Out Day.

The dedication will be exactly 25 years to the day that Victor Salvo and Lori Cannon conceived of the idea while attending the Second March on Washington in 1987. Since the project was first announced, a board of directors has been elected and installed. Community leaders and politicians have also come on board with their support. The project has also been contacted by educational institutions and programs such as the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, Prevent School Violence Illinois and several GSA ( gay-straight alliance ) advisors to develop curricula and other educational materials based on the Legacy Walk which will be used to combat bullying and promote awareness and acceptance of the LGBT community.

Members of the new board of directors are Salvo ( founder and executive director ) , Laurie Dittman ( board chairperson ) , Paul Fairchild ( board vice-chairperson ) , Owen Keehnen ( board secretary ) , Jason Hendrix ( board treasurer ) and six additional board members: Cleo Wilson, John Menefee, Leslie Schreiber, Paul Highfield, Gerri Spinella and Lori Cannon.

Dittman said, "I am very proud to be involved with the Legacy Project. As with any study of history, the Legacy Project is as much about the future as it is the past. It will help define who we are and our contributions to society and culture. And, as a result, I have no doubt that it will serve as a positive symbol for LGBT youth and what they can become."

Along with the new board members, the Legacy Project has also found a departmental home in the 44th Ward Office of Alderman Tom Tunney. "I believe this project will help solidify Halsted and Lakeview as a center of LGBT history in Chicago and across the

nation." Tunney said adding " I am proud that the project will impart our community's history to residents and visitors alike and look forward to making it a reality."

Since the 44th Ward is also home to the Northalsted Business Alliance, which is charged with the upkeep of the landmark rainbow pylons, Salvo contacted the alliance about using the pylons for the installation, and the board was very receptive. The alliance will be assisting the project in various ways including coordinating meetings with the city or having their street cleaning team clean up and care for the project installations ( which will take up the bottom half of the pylons ) .

"We think the project is a wonderful opportunity to recognize the important contributions of the honorees, as well as educating the neighborhood and our considerable tourist population," said Patrick Harms, Northalsted Business Alliance President and owner of Circuit Nightclub.

Harms went on to say "the neighborhood will become a living museum of sorts with plans in the works for a visitor's resource center and gift shop to compliment the outdoor Legacy Walk. Bringing visitors to our area is just one of the functions that the project will perform, however, there's much more to it than that. The Legacy Project is already building bridges and several groups have expressed interest in developing educational materials based on the project—materials that we hope would help LGBT youth and ultimately prevent school bullying."

U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley, whose congressional district encompasses the Lakeview area where the rainbow pylons are located, said, "Throughout the history of this country, the contributions of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people have been minimized, or worse—outright ignored. The Legacy Project will help restore some of that lost history by telling the stories of individuals who transcended bigotry and made meaningful contributions to our society."

**"For those who have been in the trenches in the lifelong fight for LGBT equality, the Legacy Project will be a spectacular reflection of history of the LGBT community," said state Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, whose district includes the Lakeview neighborhood where the Legacy Walk will be located, adding that "This is not just important locally, but also nationally and internationally. I am very excited to see it come to fruition. I am certain that the Legacy Project will become a destination unto itself."**

Bill Greaves, the City of Chicago's liaison to the LGBT communities, said "It's an interesting project that reflects the depth of the LGBT history worldwide and Victor has made great progress in bringing it forward. Alderman Tunney's office is working on the project and has the support of the City."

"We have paid a tremendous price to live in a society that has denied our historic relevance... it is at the core of every lie, every exaggeration, every myth that has ever thwarted our push for equal justice. It is the very reason why we have had to fight to

begin with. If there is one thing I truly, truly hope and pray The Legacy Walk accomplishes, it would be to know that it gave straight kids destined to become bullies a reason to stop and reconsider—and GLBT kids on the dark road to suicide a sense of what might be possible for them if they just hang in there. If we can accomplish that, then we will have taken a huge step toward the day when, maybe, we won't have to fight any more." said Salvo.

Salvo also noted that the Gerber/Hart Library has signed on as the fiscal agent for the project. Funding for the project will be made primarily through corporate underwriting, philanthropic grants, private donors/sponsorships and community donations.

Already, there have been dozens of presentations to a variety of PFLAG ( Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays ) chapters and educational institutions. As the project moves forward there will be house parties, group presentation, seminars and a booth will be set up at Northalsted Market Days in August to get the word out to the public. Winger Marketing has agreed to serve as their public relations firm on a pro bono basis. Noted LGBT historian, University of Illinois at Chicago professor and author John D'Emilio has also sent a letter of support for the project.

For more information, to make a tax-deductible donation or to submit your own nominations for the project ( which will resume in the fall of this year ) please visit their website [www.legacyprojectchicago.org](http://www.legacyprojectchicago.org) or contact Salvo at 312-608-1198. To get the latest updates on the projects progress go to their Facebook page here <http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Legacy-Project/124794807576962> and their twitter feed here <http://twitter.com/legacywalk2012>.