

# OUT/WEST

October/November 2006

A BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION FROM



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### **Western Equality's Mission:**

Western Equality of Grand Junction is creating a more fair community and working for equal rights through advocacy, education, support, referrals, and mobilization of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) community, our allies, and the public.

# OutWest

OutWest newsletter is published bi-monthly by Western Equality, PO Box 3335, Grand Junction, CO 81502 • 970-242-8949

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Editor: Mike Mansheim

Contributors: Jeff Basinger, Camille Cary, Mike Mansheim, Shari Daly-Miller, Gloria Perez

*Opinions expressed in commentary/op-ed articles are those of the author and may not represent the opinion of Western Equality's board of directors or its members.*

If you would like to contribute or comment, please submit to: Mike Mansheim, Editor  
Western Equality *OutWest*  
PO Box 3335  
Grand Junction, CO 81501  
or e-mail to [info@westernequality.org](mailto:info@westernequality.org).

## WESTERN EQUALITY

### OFFICE HOURS

Tuesday-Friday: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Saturday: Noon - 4 p.m.

### OFFICE LOCATION

523-1/2 Main Street, #11  
Between 5th and 6th streets, on the 2nd floor of the historic Margery Building in downtown Grand Junction

### PHONE

970-242-8949

### E-MAIL

[info@westernequality.org](mailto:info@westernequality.org)

### WEBSITE

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

**Join Western Equality members and board of directors at our monthly potluck, the first Thursday of each month at our downtown Grand Junction office at 6 p.m. For a list of other events, please visit our website at [www.westernequality.org](http://www.westernequality.org).**

## Support Western Equality — Become a member today!

Member Information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Type:

New  Renewal

\$15 single membership

\$20 couple/family membership

\$10 student membership

Additional donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: All new and increased memberships received through December 2006 will be matched by the Gill Foundation.*

I want to help! Please contact me!

I'd like to receive information from and about Western Equality via e-mail.

Please make your check payable to Western Equality and mail to:

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Western Equality  
PO Box 3335  
Grand Junction, CO 81502

## Exhibit Creates Awareness and Opens Dialogue

### Portraits Sparked Six Weeks of Community Discussions About GLBT Issues

The experience of having the exhibit 'Love Makes a Family' in Grand Junction has been mostly positive. The supportive and positive comments and letters have far outnumbered the negative letters to the editor, comments in the *Sentinel's* "You Said It" column, and even an event at the college that gained national recognition. Far more people offered supportive comments and thanked us for having a presence and bringing the exhibit to the area than I would have guessed.

One purpose of the exhibit was to bring awareness about our local GLBT community, namely that there are GLBT families in the Grand Valley and throughout western Colorado. That goal was definitely accomplished over the past six weeks. The exhibit has stimulated much needed dialogue about gay and lesbian relationships. This dialogue has given us the opportunity to educate our neighbors about the legal rights and responsibilities that Domestic Partnerships will grant committed same-sex couples.

I was recently talking to a friend about Domestic Partnerships (DP) and it occurred to me that perhaps people of the "older generation" might not agree that there is need

for such legal status. Couples who have been together for years (some decades) may have already taken legal steps to assure that they are afforded some of the rights that a DP would provide. There may be people who, for one reason or another, may not think they will ever need the protections of such a legal status.

What I realized was that years ago, the atmosphere of being gay or lesbian was far different from what it is today. The expectations of openly being in a relationship and/or having a family were much different than they are today. Even the level of acceptance of our relationships is higher than it was years ago. I believe this makes a difference regarding the importance of having legal recognition of our relationships.

For young people now, there is no automatic belief that just because they are gay or lesbian they won't someday have children. There is no automatic belief that they may not ever have a long-term relationship where they will be known as a couple. There is no automatic and pervasive thought that they need to hide the fact that they are a couple.

This change in the attitudes and beliefs of the "younger generation" leads naturally to needing

protections and yes, the respect that a recognized legal status gives our relationships.

Protection and respect for our relationships is necessary even as we grow older. What happens to us as we begin to need assistance to carry out our daily activities, deal with health issues or, maybe, require nursing home care? Will we be separated from those we love and with whom we have had a relationship because we have no legal rights to be together? Domestic Partnership is a way to insure that we have some of the rights and responsibilities of committed couples.

Consider and learn about what Domestic Partnerships can do not only for you but for all of your brothers and sisters who are in or some day may be in a committed relationship. This issue is of major importance in our attainment of equal rights. Colorado is the first state to place this kind of pro-active referendum on the ballot.

If you would like to show your financial support, check out the website [www.iWalkForFairness.org](http://www.iWalkForFairness.org). You can be a virtual walker or you can support my virtual walk across Colorado. Thank you.

-- Gloria Perez

**We'd like to extend a special "Thank You" to members of the Grand Valley Marriage Equality Council, as well as the numerous organizations and individuals who generously supported this exhibit by giving their time, money, and encouragement.**

## Update from AmeriCorps Staff

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### Hi everyone. I've finished my AmeriCorps orientation and am now learning the ropes at the office.

During orientation, I had a lot of information pumped into me about local agencies and their services. Our community has numerous non-profit agencies extending a compassionate hand to our youth. I intend to collaborate with other AmeriCorps people serving at various sites in hope of expanding our voice for GLBT youth. In return, I also plan to be an instrument of support to the worthwhile goals of other non-profit organizations.

A few highlights from my training I would like to share with you:

- The Tree House presented an hour-long suicide prevention training. This condensed training, known as The Yellow Ribbon program, gets to the crux by helping people know how to ask if someone is having suicidal thoughts. The Yellow Ribbon program was founded in 1994 by the parents and friends of Mike Emme, who took his life when he did not know the words to say, or how to let someone know he was in trouble and needed help. Yellow Ribbon cards enable youth who are having suicidal thoughts to simply present their Yellow Ribbon card to someone like a teacher, clergy person, counselor, or friend indicating they need help. On the back of the card is a crisis hotline telephone number to call. Yellow Ribbon cards are available at the Tree House located at 15<sup>th</sup> and Chipeta in Grand Junction.
- The Tree House Homeless Youth Shelter (THYS), located on 827 Rood Avenue, offers a place for teens to stay overnight for a designated number of nights. This allows youth in abusive or other strained circumstances a chance to work out a plan to better their life. Day services include the use of laundry facilities and showers, which meets the needs of youth who only want or need a place to get cleaned up.

If anyone is looking for a particular need to be met, or you just want to know what resources are out there, please don't hesitate to call. I would be glad to share more information suited to your inquiries. I will be staffing the Western Equality office the same days and hours that Gloria worked (Tuesday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and two Saturdays a month.) It's good to be on board!

—Camille Cary

**You can reach Camille via e-mail at [info@westernequality.org](mailto:info@westernequality.org) or by calling the Western Equality office at 970-242-8949.**

## Thank You, Kellie

A special thank you to Kellie, co-owner of the Coffee Studio in Grand Junction, for her willingness to publicly share a very personal, tragic story. Kellie was willing to get on stage to share her story during an open house for Referendum I held at Mesa State College. She also joined us during a meeting with the *Daily Sentinel's* editorial board. Kellie put a very human face on the issue, and helped explain why domestic partnerships would provide basic legal protections so many committed couples need.

If you find yourself in the area, stop by the Coffee Studio, buy a cup of joe, and thank Kellie for helping educate our community and her personal bravery in advocating for Referendum I.

—Mike Mansheim

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## Exciting Times at Western Equality

The past year has been one of incredible development for Western Equality. As we look forward—beyond the chaos that is the political season—there are many exciting projects on the horizon for our organization.

We are continuing to forge relationships with other local non-profits, and reaching out into the community to serve as a voice for GLBT people living in western Colorado. I'm particularly hopeful that Western Equality will be able to build on preliminary discussions with our friends at the Tree House and PRIDE at Mesa State to develop a GLBTQA youth peer support group. The collaboration could result in interesting educational programming to support local youth, as well as create additional opportunities for all organizations.

As we enter the fourth quarter of 2006, Western Equality is finalizing plans to partner with The GLBT Center in Denver and the Mesa County Health Department as a member of the SmokeFree GLBT Task Force. Through this

collaboration, it's our intention to develop and implement tobacco education/cessation programming specifically for the GLBT community on the western slope. For many reasons, a disproportionate number of GLBT persons use (i.e. are addicted to) tobacco. It's our hope to develop avenues by which we can reach out to those who want to quit and help them in the process. At the same time, we'll make strides to reduce the number of people in our community who begin using tobacco, especially among youth.

Through the support of the Gill foundation, Western Equality's board has completed the first phase of a capacity building project with JVA Consulting. With their continued support, we will embark on an intensive workplan to further develop the organization's infrastructure allowing us to better and more effectively serve our members and the entire GLBT population on the western slope.

Thanks to the hard work of our founding board member Jeff Basinger, we received a \$5000

grant from the Johnson Family Foundation. Part of these funds have already been put to good use, and the remainder assures that Western Equality has the cash flow necessary to enter into the collaborations mentioned above.

Later this month, the board of directors will participate in a strategic planning retreat. There is much to discuss and decide as we look forward to the future of Western Equality. As always, we welcome your thoughts and ideas. If anything mentioned peaks your curiosity or interest, give us a call and let your thoughts be known. If time permits, join us at an event or simply send an e-mail or postal letter. We want to hear from you.

Keep your eyes and ears open as we explore the possibilities. These are exciting times and we look forward to continuing to develop a strong, healthy queer community in western Colorado.

— Mike Mansheim

### Western Equality Is Radio-Active!

Tune in to **Family, Friends & Neighbors** the 3rd Monday of every month at noon **on KAFM 88.1 Community Radio**. And if you miss a broadcast, don't worry — you can download and listen to past episodes on Western Equality's website! Check it out at [www.westernequality.org](http://www.westernequality.org).

## Thanks for Making OutFest a Success!

### Initial Planning for this Spring's Masquerade Now Underway

History was made twice the evening of August 25th: for the first time, Western Equality's name was in bright lights on the marquee facing 1st and Main Streets, and a record number of attendees came out to have a good time and support Western Equality.

Thanks to the hundreds of community members who flocked to Two Rivers Convention Center, Western Equality hosted its most successful OutFest to date! Over \$1000 was raised to support the important work Western Equality is involved in.

A special "thank you" to all of our volunteers and everyone who attended. We hope a good time was had by all. If you'd like to get involved with the planning of our next large event, Masquerade, or help with other small events, please call the office to learn when the next committee planning meeting will be held.



## Dinner and a Movie

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If you'd like to rent a horror movie that has a bit of a queer twist this year, check out these titles:

In ***Mortuary***, the new coroner in town discovers an icky secret lurking underground. Do her cadavers stay dead? Of course not – what fun would that be? ***Single White Female*** shows how far someone goes to be the perfect roommate, and Jennifer Tilly becomes the ***Bride of Chucky***, in which a stabby good time is had by... well, not all, pretty much just Chuck and Jen.

If you're in the mood for a drinking game, count the gay undertones in ***Fright Night*** or ***Nightmare on Elm Street 2: Freddie's [Big Gay] Revenge*** (no guarantees that the movie will actually be good). ***Sleepaway Camp*** keeps everyone in the dark, and ***Blood Moon*** (the one with Tim Curry) is genuine freakish fun – the stripping midget is well worth a rental fee. It's not gay (just British, ha ha), but the zombiphiles will get a kick out of ***Shaun of the Dead***. Can't get your fill of camp? Then pick up ***Elvira, Mistress of the Dark***.

More titles and suggestions can be found online at [campblood.org](http://campblood.org), a website devoted to queerness in horror flicks. Have a gay old time, even if the people in the movie don't!

–Drew Parker

**To find a goulash to go with the campy horror flicks above (and just in time for Halloween too!) check out Western Equality's website at [www.westernequality.org](http://www.westernequality.org).**

## Don't Become a Victim of the Bystander Effect

A friend recently came across a woman lying on the ground—apparently unconscious—with the contents of her purse strewn about. She stopped to see if the woman needed help, and in the midst of awakening her and waiting for authorities to arrive, learned that a man parked nearby had also noticed the woman but failed to see if she needed help. He assumed a passer-by would come across the woman and offer a hand. A classic example of the bystander effect.

The bystander effect, according to Wikipedia, is “a psychological phenomenon where persons are less likely to intervene in an emergency situation when others are present than when they are alone. The most common explanation of the phenomenon is that, with others present, observers all assume that someone else is going to intervene and so they each individually refrain from doing so.”

As a community, our “emergency situation” takes many forms. It’s the relentless attack by right-wing ideologues who continue to mount efforts to marginalize our lives and our families. It’s the ridiculous antics of our Young Republicans, and their elder party leaders (like county commissioner Janet Rowland), who embolden bigots by comparing our relationships to bestiality, incest, and polygamy, while attempting to make a political statement.

It’s learning another member of our community was targeted and murdered because of who he

was, and the unwillingness of a prosecutor or community to call it what it is: a crime motivated by irrational hate.

As a community, our emergency situation is the death of a young person who commits suicide because s/he is continually inundated with the misguided ideas of religious extremists. Ideas that—absorbed over the course of a young life—reinforce the untruth that there is something inherently wrong, immoral, or tainted about us. Ideas that equate to a systematic attack on our self-worth.

Our emergency situation is the fact that many of us feel the need to live secret isolated lives for fear of losing our jobs or damaging relationships with colleagues, friends, or family.

As a community, our emergency situation is the fact that there are huge health disparities between our heterosexual peers and us, due in part to the stresses of homophobia, the lack of GLBT-sensitive care, and the lack of access to a partner’s health insurance benefits.

So what can be done? Each of us must act to confront the emergency situation facing us. The belief that someone else will work to address the issues facing our community, facing each and every one of us, is no different than the man sitting in his car, letting a woman lie on the ground unconscious. The woman embodies all of us. She is you, your friends, your current and future crush, your partner. We must take the initiative and act—each in our

own way—to create lasting change and the community we live in.

Challenge yourself to confront your fears and step out of your comfort zone. This may involve coming out to a friend or colleague. Perhaps it’s calling Western Equality to find a healthcare provider with whom you can be honest. It might take the form of writing a letter to the editor or to an elected official. One of the easiest ways to act is to register to vote and then actually cast a ballot this November 7th.

Learn about the issues; understand why domestic partnerships are needed. Elect officials that will truly represent and advocate for all citizens, including you and me (check out the Colorado Stonewall Dems site to see how candidates stack-up when questioned about their stance on GLBT issues.) Donate your time or a few bucks to Western Equality or another of the numerous non-profits working to make the Grand Valley a better place.

Whatever you do, no matter what you do... find a way—your way—to not be victimized by being the bystander.

—Mike Mansheim

# Check Out What's Happening With Groups & Events!

To help bring our community together, Western Equality is looking to promote and facilitate various events and groups.

We've come up with some ideas (listed below) and other ideas were suggested at OutFest. There has been strong interest shown for several, and we'd like to strive to get at least some of these off the ground.

Here's where we talk about your part in the success of this venture.

**How many times have you said, "I wish there was more stuff for us GLBT'ers to do here on the Western slope.?"** How many times have you wished you knew how to get to know other GLBT'ers? How many times have you wondered how you could get more involved in our community?

**Well here's the answer: (Tada!)** Volunteer to be a contact person, coordinate, or help with one of the groups or events.

Let's face it. Everyone's busy. And much of the work done at Western Equality is the result of hard-working committed volunteers who sure could use help! So, how about utilizing your gifts and talents in fun constructive ways? (And hey, it looks good on a résumé.)

If you would be willing to coordinate or help on the team organizing any of the following, please indicate this when you contact us.

Check the Western Equality website for groups forming and further information: [westernequality.org](http://westernequality.org)

## Sign-Up Now for:

- Gay Movie &/or Theater Night
- Women's Chocolate-Fantasy (Contact persons: Sheri & Jessica)
- Dyke Hike (Contact person: Sallie)
- Wine-and-Dine Dinner Groups (at local restaurants)
- Cook-&-Dine-Together Group
- Camp-Out
- Couple's Group
- Singles Scene: Men
- Singles Scene: Women
- GLBT Families:
  - Lesbian Moms (contact person: Mollie) and
  - Gay Dads
- Teen/Young Adult Group
- Coffee House Group
- Poets and Artists Group
- Art Show by Queer Artists
- Queer Choir
- Online Virtual Groups
- Gay & Gray: Older GLBT Group
- Trans Group
- Shopping
- Rodeo
- Bi Group

(Please Note: If you see that a group has formed that you signed up for at OutFest, and you don't get contacted, it's because we couldn't read your hand-writing (sorry). So, please contact us and sign up again!)

If you would like to add your name to any of the following groups or events, or would like more information, please call the Western Equality office at: (970) 242-8949 or email us: [info@westernequality.org](mailto:info@westernequality.org).



## October Events for Gay/Bi/Queer Men

### October 18

BOWLING at GJ Scores! 6pm. Free food, beverages, lanes, and shoes! Ask for the ManREACH group at the front desk.

### October 27-30

MANREACH RETREAT at Cal-Wood near Boulder. Visit [www.manreach.org](http://www.manreach.org) for registration & information.

REGISTER NOW for the last statewide men's retreat this year!

### November 1

M-Group – 6 PM  
WestCAP (805 Main Street)  
Dinner and beverages provided.

For more information on any event contact: Paul Jones 970.361.1282 or Jeff Basinger 970.243.2437

PRESENTED BY: ManREACH  
Building heart-centered connections and community for gay/bi/queer men in rural Colorado. Visit [www.manreach.org](http://www.manreach.org) for your areas contact information.

## Looking for a Great Place to Hike or Bike?

Watch for this space in *OutWest*, and I'll tell you some of my favorites.

There are a lot of great trails in the Monument, but I have dogs who love to hike, so I don't usually hike there – kind of feel like I'm betraying them if I go without them. Right now, though, I'm trying to get in shape for a backpacking trip, so I want a place where I can get a pretty good work out without taking too much time. Serpent's Trail is perfect.

Two mornings/week, I try to hike Serpent's Trail. It takes me less than 15 minutes to drive to the trailhead. In September, it's dark when I leave the house, but light enough to see when I get to the trailhead. There are always 2-3 cars in the parking lot before I get there, though, and I usually meet the first one coming down before I am halfway up. Last week the sun came over the Mesa just as I got to the top of the trail. This week, the sun isn't peeking over the top until I'm on my way down.

I've read in different places that the trail is  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile long, and that it's  $2\frac{1}{4}$  miles long. I don't think either of those is correct – I'm guessing about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles each way. It's a pretty steady climb with great views of the Valley. The lower trailhead is just inside the east entrance – the road curves to the left, and just before a short downhill before the big climb, there is a parking lot on the left. When it's crowded, you may have to park across the road at the Devil's Kitchen picnic area. The upper trailhead is just past the tunnel – the road makes a sharp turn to the left, and just before the road curves back to the right, there's a small (room for 4 cars) parking area on the left.

If you go regularly, you'll recognize folks who always go at that time or on that day. Most everyone is friendly and has a smile and a "Hello!" Some walk slowly, chatting with friends, others run both up and down the trail, but the majority are somewhere in between.

When I'm training, I try to start hiking a few weeks before my trip. After a few hikes, I put on a backpack, and gradually add weight to the pack. The heavier my pack gets, the more friendly people get – they want to know if I'm training and where I'm going.

On weekends, I do longer hikes, and usually drive further – especially when it's hot here in the Valley. I'll tell you about some of those places, too, in future issues.

–Mary Coombs

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## Western Equality Forges Relationship with Hospice and Palliative Care of Western Colorado

One of the positives of living in the Grand Valley is the high quality of medical care that is available here. Hospice and Palliative Care of Western Colorado is one example of quality care for people and their families facing a life threatening or terminal illness. Western Equality has begun to forge a relationship with Hospice that will help them learn how to include GLBT folks and consideration of our issues in the work that they do.

Hospice's staff of nurses, certified nursing assistants, chaplains, counselors, and volunteers provide care from a philosophic belief that each person has the right to "live with dignity and without pain during the last stages of life". They approach their care from an interdisciplinary perspective that highlights symptom and pain management. When a life comes to an end, bereavement counselors help family members --including children and teens --with the grieving process. They also have administrative staff whose job it is to hire and train these people for their care giving activities. There are people who develop plans and create informative brochures that describe their work.

The people at Hospice have invited Western Equality (WE) to be part of a group whose purpose is to have Hospice be inclusive of all of the diverse people here in the Valley with the services that they offer. This is an exciting step forward for them as well as for us. In the coming months WE will be part of this taskforce's regular meetings that will develop plans to bring information and suggestions for training to all the employees at Hospice. We already have a few allies there and are confident that there may be others whom we have not yet met. I am excited that WE has the opportunity to have a positive impact on Hospice. Camille will keep you updated on the progress that Hospice makes in becoming more aware of our needs and able to work with us in a respectful and sensitive manner.

If you would like more information about what Hospice may be able to do for you, please contact our office at 970-242-8949, or visit the Hospice website at [www.gvhospice.com](http://www.gvhospice.com).

-- Gloria Perez

## Western Equality and WestCAP Continue Collaborating in Outreach to Men's Community

For years, the staff and directors of Western Equality and the Western Colorado AIDS Project (WestCAP) have collaborated in outreach to gay/bi/queer men. And, if you've read about or participated in any of the numerous men's activities this summer, it's clear that this important collaboration continues.

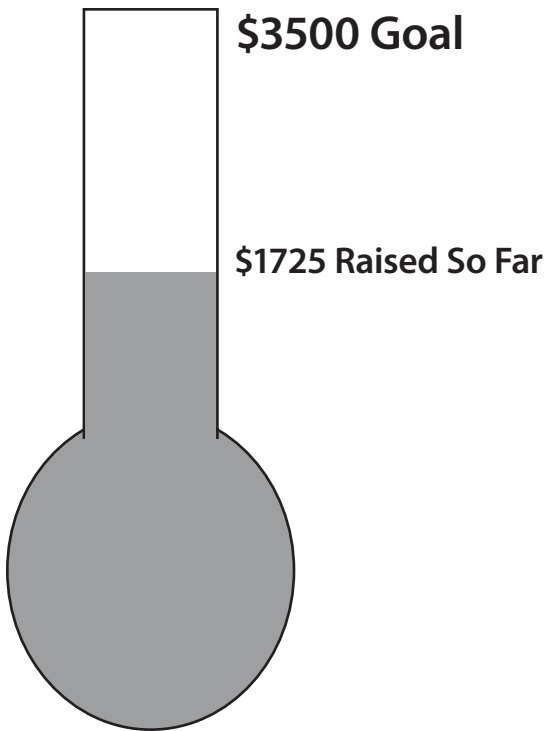
WestCAP's ManREACH program aims to build heart-centered connections and community for gay/bi/queer men in rural Colorado. The unique program is part of a comprehensive HIV education and prevention plan implemented locally by WestCAP.

Western Equality is proud to have played a small part in this outreach, and looks forward to providing continuing support to WestCAP.

**See page 8 for upcoming events, including the inaugural M-Group meeting November 1st at 6pm!**

**Learn more about ManREACH by calling 970-243-2437**





## There's Still Time to Double Your Money!

The Gill Foundation has provided Western Equality with a \$3500 challenge grant for 2006. All new and increased memberships and donations will be matched, dollar-for-dollar, up to \$3500 by the Gill Foundation.

But we've only got until December to reach our goal of \$3500. Help us bridge the gap. To donate, please submit your check to:

Treasurer  
Western Equality  
PO Box 3335  
Grand Junction, CO 81502

## Referendum I: Domestic Partnerships

They are finally here!

Coloradans for Fairness has bumper stickers, and lapel stickers, and yard signs! So don't forget to go down and pick some up and show your support! The CFF office is located at 102 N. 4th and is open M-F from 9am till 5pm. You can also support by volunteering or hosting a house party. Call 986-4562 to learn more. Let's go out and make a difference!

To learn more about Referendum I, visit [www.fairequal.org](http://www.fairequal.org).

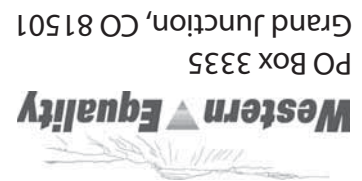
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## Thank You to Our Funders:

Western Equality is supported by memberships, donations, and grants from the Chinook Fund, the Gill Foundation, and the Johnson Family Foundation. **Thank you for your support.**





PO Box 3335  
Grand Junction, CO 81501

## RESOURCES FOR YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY provided locally by Western Equality —

- Rural Library Project (stop by and check it out)
- Resource Directory (referrals for medical, legal, and mental health providers, plus welcoming faith communities)
- Presentations of *Journey to a Hate-Free Millennium* and GLBT 101 (great for schools, businesses, and civic organizations)
- Hate Crime Trainings for Law Enforcement (in collaboration with our friends at the Colorado Anti-Violence Project)
- Radio Show on KAFM 88.1 the third Monday of each month at noon
- Events both large and small
- and much more...

*Learn more online or call the office at 970-242-8949*

Visit Western Equality On the Web >>>

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