

AZ Giving Spotlight: Linda Elliott of one•n•ten

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Envisioning a world where all LGBTQ youth and young adults are embraced for who they are, actively involved in their communities, and empowered to become influential leaders, is the purpose behind what one•n•ten stands for. This nonprofit organization has spent the last 20 years encouraging and empowering the LGBTQ community. Linda Elliott, the executive director, gave us more insight about the organization's involvement in the Valley.

AFM: one•n•ten is a very unique name. Tell us about how this organization started.

LE: one•n•ten was founded in 1993 by a group of community members to provide a safe and welcoming space for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth. one•n•ten enhances lives by providing empowering social and service programs that promote self-expression, self-acceptance, leadership development and healthy life choices. When founded, it was generally accepted that about 1 in 10 people were gay or lesbian.

AFM: What age range do you normally work with?

LE: Our youth range from 14-24 years old, although at our OUTdoor Camp, youth as young as 11 are participants. 40 percent of all homeless youth are LGBTQ, yet they only represent 5-10 percent of the youth population. It is a critical problem that we have begun to address through our supportive housing program. We currently have 15 youth in this program, and except for three who came into the program late last year, all are employed, in school, or both. By the end of summer we will have 25-30 youth in the housing program.

AFM: What kind of programs have you created for the youth and young adults involved in your organization?

LE: Since moving to our new 3000-sq.-ft. Youth Center in 2012, we have been able to greatly expand our programs and services. We have provided programming on suicide prevention and HIV prevention for many years and have offered OUTdoor Camp each summer for the last 6 years. In the last two years, we have added Q High, a high school diploma program for youth who have dropped out of school because they did not feel safe; Promise of a New Day supportive housing program for homeless LGBTQ youth; and arts, music, dance, poetry, and physical recreation have also been added to our programs. We are developing a Learning Lab to provide job readiness skills for our at-risk youth.

AFM: Can you tell me more about the 5th Annual Fresh Brunch?

LE: Our 5th Annual Fresh Brunch will be held Feb. 16 at the Arizona Biltmore Resort in the Frank Lloyd Wright Ballroom. We expect 1,000 guests at the event which will feature entertainment by our youth, a live and silent Auction. Wells Fargo is the presenting sponsor. For tickets visit www.onenten.org.

AFM: How has one•n•ten impacted the Valley?

LE: We have provided a critical resource to LGBTQ youth in the Valley and served almost 2,500 youth with various programs and services. LGBTQ youth are eight times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers so our suicide prevention, self-acceptance and OUTdoor Camp programs truly save lives. In short, one•n•ten provides support, friendship, resources and hope to youth who have been abused, marginalized or rejected because of who they are.