

A Grand Celebration

The 6th Annual POCC Sexuality and Gender Alliance Committee celebration took place on April 26th, and, as always, it was a fantastic time. The space was transformed from a simple conference room into a true party complete with multi-colored balloons and decorations. The room was filled to capacity with many friends and supporters of the SAGA committee and the love was palpable in the atmosphere.

There was comedy to open the event which served to set the tone and kick the entire event off with levity and joy. The theme of the event was “We Stand Together,” and it was clear from the outset that celebrating not just the SAGA committee and its accomplishments throughout the year but also celebrating LGBTQ+ people was the goal of the event. This was accomplished through various media including informational handouts on famous/important dates and trailblazers within the LGBTQ+ movement and LGBTQ+ history.

The speakers at the event captivated the audience and had us all hanging on their words. Julian Plumadore, the Senior Programs Manager at PEERS, shared their lived experience as a transgender person, and educated those in attendance on transgender issues.

Joe Hawkins, the CEO and co-founder of the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center, spoke of the founding of the center and how it has grown from humble beginnings to become a shining beacon of hope and meeting place. There, people in the Bay Area connect, whether members of the LGBTQ+ community or an ally seeking a place to help, learn, grow, and find their place.

Joe also shared some of his personal struggle that inspired him to establish the center, and how he desired to have a place in Oakland for others with similar struggles, who felt there was not a place in their own community where they could go. His passion was evident through his words and is evident through the work he continues to do.

One of the other speakers was DeAngela Cooks, the co-founder of the Mosaic Collaborative (<https://www.themosaiccollaborative.com/>), an organization providing “for-profits, non-profits and educational settings with the framework and tools needed to incorporate all voices in decision making, cultural norms and programmatic innovations.” DeAngela told how the collaborative came to be and why she and her co-founder, Taunya Black felt the need to create the organization.

DeAngela relayed her experiences with humor and refreshing realness, and had us laughing while we were engaging and learning.

There was music and a lovely lunch with various sandwiches, chips, fruit, and drinks among other delicious offerings.

The SAGA Committee members spoke about what the committee means to them and how special being a part of the committee is for them. We were all also treated to an incredible poem entitled “Make America Gay Again,” written by the talented poet, LaMar Mitchell, that had the room cheering!

The event concluded with games, an awesome raffle, and a rousing closing song from the founder of the SAGA committee, Kozi Arrington, who also served as the emcee for the event. The song, entitled “I Hope You Dance,” left all of us with our toes tapped and our hearts lifted. It served as the perfect bookend to a full and truly enjoyable afternoon.

On behalf of the SAGA Committee, I would like to thank Mary Hogden for all of her continued support of our committee and, as the current chair of the committee, I would like to say thank you to the members of the SAGA Committee - Lisa, Lynnette, Brian, Paulette, Walter, LaMar, Tanya, Lawrence, and, of course, Kozi, not only for making the event so memorable and awesome, but for all of the work that they have put in this year. You truly embodied the theme of this year’s event. It only works when “We Stand Together”.

By Steve H.