

**EQUITY**

**ACTION**

**THE MILLION DOLLAR**

**Challenge Campaign**

2008–2011



**EQUITY**

**ACTION**

**Rhode Island's Fund for Sexual Orientation  
and Gender Identity Issues**

**A Field of Interest Fund at the Rhode Island Foundation**



**THE RHODE ISLAND FOUNDATION**

# Diversity

Rhode Island draws its spirit, vitality and character from the increasingly diverse mix of people who live, work, and raise families within its neighborhoods. Our state's history is steeped in a tradition of freedom, where difference is embraced and individual rights are protected. Yet for members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community, a disproportionate amount of emotional distress, discrimination, injustice, and violence is experienced.

We know through the history of the civil rights movement in this country that no one is free until everyone is free. But how do we address the needs and struggles of LGBTQ citizens in a way

that strengthens our community and protects all Rhode Islanders?

In 2002, a group of community volunteers partnered with The Rhode Island Foundation to establish Equity Action, a special interest fund at the Foundation that advances the equitable treatment and improves the quality of life of LGBTQ Rhode Islanders. The catalyst was a 2:1 challenge grant of \$100,000 from the National Lesbian and Gay Community Funding Partnership (NLGCFP), a national foundation based in New York, now known as Funders for Lesbian and Gay Issues.

Rhode Island was the first of 32 NLGCFP grantees to meet its match, raising more than \$200,000 by early 2005. The \$100,000 match was approved and went directly into grant dollars for LGBTQ communities. The remaining money seeded the

## EQUITY ACTION TIMELINE

### 2002

- Volunteer task force convened to help define and initiate the Fund



### 2004

- *Meet the Neighbors*, a community scan of LGBTQ Rhode Islanders, is published
- Inaugural grants distributed



**EQUITY**

**ACTION**

### 2003

- Fund created with two initial gifts totaling \$2,500
- First Advisory Council formed

### 2005

- \$200,000 raised and \$100,000 matched by National Funders
- Million Dollar Challenge Announced



Equity Action Fund, a permanent endowment that has created the groundwork for future fiscal growth.

### Equity Action

Governed by an advisory council of community volunteers, Equity Action is committed to social change in order to achieve justice within LGBTQ communities. Strategic distribution of earnings from its permanent endowment enables the fund to:

- Strengthen LGBTQ-led and serving organizations through grant making.
- Provide educational opportunities that highlight the need for equitable treatment of LGBTQ individuals.
- Advance networking and foster collaboration between LGBTQ and mainstream organizations.

- Support nonprofit partners working on progressive public policy and public debate.

In addition, Equity Action works to enhance philanthropy by and for the LGBTQ communities and ensure support for future generations by actively soliciting gifts for the endowment.

**“If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.”**

MARGARET MEAD

### 2006

- Surpass \$250,000 mark in grants to community organizations

### 2008

- Campaign Committee formed and announced
- Endowment grows to \$500,000 through gifts and investment earnings

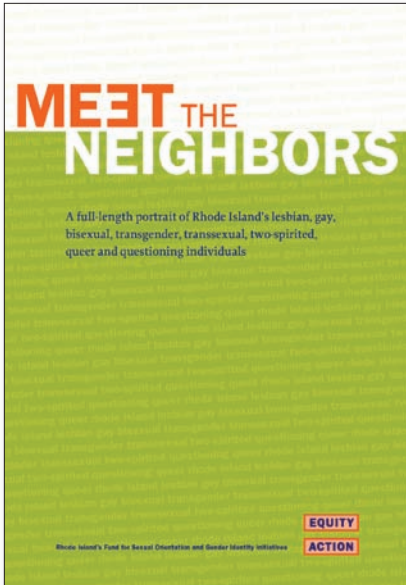


### 2007

- Equity Action receives its first bequest
- First Town Meeting bringing together LGBTQ-serving organizations



# Courage



## Meet the Neighbors

In 2004, The Rhode Island Foundation and Equity Action proudly published *Meet the Neighbors*, the first-ever full-length portrait of Rhode Island's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals.

In this landmark community scan, a sample of 371 individuals was surveyed, revealing that the LGBTQ population

looks much like the rest of the state. They are varied in ethnic and racial backgrounds, gender, and age. They have long-term relationships, extended families, and children. They live throughout the state, working in a wide range of sectors and contributing to all aspects of the economic and civic life of Rhode Island.

However, these same individuals report experiences of discrimination, harassment, and prejudice in public establishments, work environments, health care, neighborhoods, schools – even walking down the street.

Only 49% of respondents reported being “out” with regard to their sexual orientation where they work, and many reported they do not disclose this information for fear of losing employment, housing, or the love of family and friends.

For young people, basic safety is a primary factor for not revealing their sexual orientation. They fear parental rejection and the likelihood of being forced out of their homes as well as mental and physical harassment in school.



Nationally, discrimination against LGBTQ individuals is widely documented. According to 2004 FBI statistics, hate crimes based on sexual orientation constituted the third highest category reported and made up 15.5 percent of all reported hate crimes. The National Coalition for the Homeless report that between 20-40% of all homeless youth identify as LGBTQ. In addition, more than one-third of youth who were homeless or in the care of social services experienced a violent physical assault when they came out.

It takes courage to recognize and stand up to discrimination – to break down the barriers of prejudice and inequity. It’s time to acknowledge the obstructions to equal protection for LGBTQ communities and share in the work of removing these barriers. This is kind of courage that Equity Action hopes to spark in all of us.

**“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”**

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

**“If we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity.”**

JOHN F. KENNEDY

# Justice

## Imagine...

You can't tell anyone at work about your spouse or significant other because it will jeopardize your relationship with coworkers and possibly your job.

## Imagine...

You are sixteen years old and kicked out of your home to live on the streets because someone tells your parents you're a lesbian.

## Imagine...

Your spouse or significant other becomes critically ill, and you aren't allowed to make any medical decisions.

*Meet the Neighbors* provides a compelling case for advancing the equitable treatment of LGBTQ residents across the Ocean State, and identifies critical areas of need. Among the top priorities the report identifies are ensuring safe

schools and youth services, advocating for civil rights and protections, expanding access to health care, recognizing the needs of elders, and supporting families. Other priorities include building community cohesiveness, addressing diversity within the communities, increasing awareness and visibility, and creating a community/resource center.

With the goal of strengthening the infrastructure and capacity of LGBTQ-led organizations and mainstream nonprofits that provide services to the LGBTQ communities, Equity Action initiated its grants program in 2004. Beginning with a round of "inaugural grants" totaling almost \$50,000, the Fund began tackling many of the priorities identified in *Meet the Neighbors*.

During the next four years, Equity Action granted more than \$340,000 to area non-profit organizations providing training and offering programs that break down barriers of prejudice and inequity. And this is just the beginning.

Equity Action envisions a world that is fair, just and equitable. The Fund is committed to social change in order to



achieve justice, recognizing that this struggle requires dedication to the protection of human rights at all levels and in all areas of community life. As a permanent endowment at The Rhode Island Foundation, Equity Action will continue to grow *in perpetuity*, providing a resource for the welfare of LGBTQ communities for generations to come.

“Without a doubt, support from Equity Action has allowed our organization to increase its visibility and meet the emotional, social and educational needs of more young people throughout the state. The Rhode Island Foundation is leading the way for other cities and states by creating a philanthropic model that is truly making a difference in LGBTQ communities.”

Funded through Equity Action, the “Becoming Visible” project raises awareness of LGBTQ individuals and their families.

JAMES ROBINSON  
*Executive Director, Youth Pride, Inc.*

*Images courtesy of (add)ventures*

I want love.  
I want acceptance.  
I want to be me.

Life is hard enough...  
Being gay shouldn't be.

[beVisibleNow.com](http://beVisibleNow.com)

Youth Pride Inc. PFLAG

This advertisement features a woman with dark hair and a grey scarf looking directly at the camera. The background is dark with some light spots. The text is arranged in two columns, with the woman's face in the center.

A college education  
 A successful career  
 Building a family

Life is hard enough...  
Being gay shouldn't be.

[beVisibleNow.com](http://beVisibleNow.com)

Youth Pride Inc. PFLAG

This advertisement features a young girl with curly hair, resting her chin on her hands and looking thoughtfully to the side. The background is a light, neutral color. The text is arranged in two columns, with the girl's face in the center.

# Responsibility

## The Million Dollar Challenge

In March 2005, The Rhode Island Foundation issued “The Million Dollar Challenge” – a promise to match dollar for dollar the next \$500,000 raised for Equity Action. This challenge demonstrates the Foundation’s exemplary leadership in the social justice arena and paves the way for Rhode Island to be in the forefront of this critical civil rights issue.

With \$125,000 of the \$500,000 already raised, a committed group of community leaders – gay and straight, men and women, and representing a wide range of sectors, communities, and racial and ethnic origins – has stepped forward

to create the Equity Action Campaign Committee. This dedicated group will work to engage past donors at a more substantial level and cultivate new individual and corporate donors in an effort to meet “The Million Dollar Challenge.” Their support demonstrates that social justice is without boundaries and everyone has a part to play in making our state a safe, vital, diverse and equitable place to work, live, and raise a family.

## Campaign Leadership

We are delighted to have the Honorable David Cicilline, mayor of the City of Providence, as our honorary chair of the campaign committee. The

## CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE\*

### **The Honorable David Cicilline** Honorary Chair

Mayor  
City of Providence

### **Sally Lapidus, Chair**

President and Co-Founder  
Residential Properties

### **Guy Abelson**

President  
Guy Abelson Events

### **Curt Columbus**

Artistic Director  
Trinity Repertory Company

### **Donna D’Aloia, MA**

Therapist

### **Edythe M. De Marco, CFP, CRPC**

Vice President  
The De Marco Group  
Merrill Lynch

### **Jim DeRentis**

Chief Business Officer  
Bank Rhode Island

### **Joyce Dolbec, MA**

Health & Literacy  
Consultant/Trainer  
YWCA Northern Rhode Island

### **Christine Edmonds**

**& Phyllis Arfa**  
Owners  
Blaze Restaurants

### **Renee Evangelista, Esq.**

Co-Managing Partner  
Rhode Island Offices  
Edwards Angell Palmer  
& Dodge, LLP

### **Michael Evora**

Executive Director  
Rhode Island Commission  
for Human Rights

### **Jim Fortier**

Chief of Staff  
Marc Allen Clothiers

### **The Honorable Gordon D. Fox**

Representative  
House Majority Leader  
State of Rhode Island

### **Ann-Marie Harrington**

President & Founder  
Embolden Design

### **Lise Iwon, Esq.**

Partner  
Laurence & Iwon

### **Peg Langhammer**

Executive Director  
Day One

### **William Lynn McKinney**

Dean, College of Human Science  
and Service  
University of Rhode Island

### **Ben Paster, Esq.**

Partner  
Paster & Harpootian, Ltd.

### **Louis Raymond**

Landscape Designer & Owner  
Renaissance Gardening

### **The Honorable Elizabeth Roberts**

Lieutenant Governor  
State of Rhode Island

### **Marc Streisand**

President and Owner  
Marc Allen Clothiers

### **Susan Symonds**

Owner  
Susan Symonds Interior Design

\* as of press time

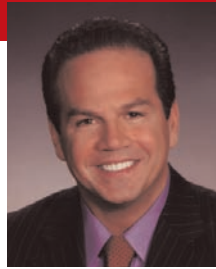
mayor's endorsement and support of the campaign demonstrates to corporate, philanthropic and business communities the viability of Equity Action and the importance it holds for creating safe, vital, and healthy neighborhoods for everyone.

Sally Lapidés, president and co-founder of Residential Properties, LTD, provides extraordinary leadership and commitment in her role of campaign chair. With the same focus and passion that led her to grow one of the premier real estate companies in the state, Sally has worked diligently on behalf of organizations that bring culture and charity to the lives of Rhode Islanders.

"From the time I was a little girl, equality was a priority and an imperative that my parents instilled in us. At that time, race, religion and creed were our fights.

As I grew up, I more fully understood that the world was filled with wonderful people who were diverse in all of those categories and I added sexual orientation to my list as well. Every day I was grateful for the differences and thought the world was a better place for it."

Under Sally's leadership, we will engage in outreach, targeted meetings and community events that will extend beyond our current donor base to identify, cultivate, and deliver new sources of financial support.



**"Providence and Rhode Island were founded on the principle of respecting the dignity of every individual. That is why we all have a stake in supporting this great, Rhode Island Foundation initiative that supports education, cultural enrichment and policy advancement on behalf of the LGBTQ community."**

DAVID CICILLINE  
*Mayor, City of Providence*



**"I embrace the opportunity to chair the Rhode Island Foundation's Equity Action Campaign Committee because I feel that this is not a gay or lesbian issue. It is everyone's issue. We must work together to promote equity and equality for each one of us, our children, and all those who will come after us."**

SALLY LAPIDÉS  
*President and Co-Founder, Residential Properties*

# Responsibility



**RENEE EVANGELISTA**  
*Co-Managing Partner, Rhode Island Offices*  
*Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge, LLP*

Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge is proud of our commitment to diversity and community. We believe that this commitment provides the Firm with a strength that directly contributes to the quality of legal services we provide. It is our honor to support Equity Action in its efforts to address the full continuum of issues facing Rhode Island's LGBTQ communities. We hope this support will help to provide Equity Action with the strength they need to ensure the safety and well-being of all Rhode Islanders.

## **Our Goal**

From May 2008 until May 2011, the Equity Action campaign will focus on raising the remaining \$375,000 of the Million Dollar Challenge. Every dollar raised will be matched by The Rhode Island Foundation – up to a total match of \$500,000.

This translates to an endowment of more than \$1 million that can generate income for ongoing grants to support LGBTQ issues in the community. And because this is a permanent fund at the Foundation, it will continue to grow in perpetuity, ensuring that each gift made today truly impacts tomorrow.

## **Corporate Support**

Companies with a vision for a strong, diverse workforce play an important role in supporting Equity Action. With your company's investment in the Million Dollar Campaign you join other corporate and community leaders whose participation demonstrates leadership and dedication to a safe and healthy Rhode Island. This is a remarkable opportunity to garner good will in the community and position your company at the forefront of

supporting diversity both within your corporation and throughout the state.

### Individual Philanthropy

Equity Action was created to address the needs and struggles of LGBTQ citizens in a way that strengthens our community and protects all Rhode Islanders. There has never been a better time or place – or more urgency – than right here and now to create equality for every member of our state.

A gift to Equity Action is not only a remarkable opportunity to express your deeply held values, but also an informed, thoughtful philanthropic decision. Your financial contribution:

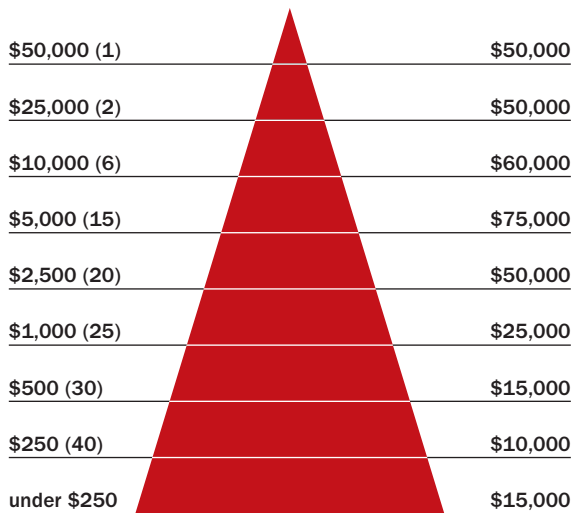
- Has a direct impact on the lives of LGBTQ Rhode Islanders, making a significant difference in their daily welfare.
- Doubles your giving through a 1:1 match from The Rhode Island Foundation.
- Is applied in entirety (100%) to the Equity Action endowment.
- Grows *in perpetuity*, generating funding today and in the future to support LGBTQ issues for generations to come.

“Be the change you want to see in the world.”

MAHATMA GHANDI

It is through your gift that the dream of Equity Action will come alive. By donating you join hundreds of visionary Rhode Islanders who have stepped forward to create a lasting legacy of tolerance and justice.

### Reaching Our Goal: \$375,000



**total: \$375,000**

## How You Can Help

The Million Dollar Challenge Campaign is an important philanthropic initiative that is not about one person or one organization. In fact, the opposite is true. Everyone – LGBTQ or not – can play a role. We invite you to become involved through:

### Giving

There are a number of avenues for giving and a variety of gift structures to ensure your support of Equity Action is meaningful to you. Gifts of cash, publically traded securities, pledges, life income and deferred gifts are all options. Your generosity and vision will be recognized on our website and in special publications. And of course, your gift is tax deductible to the full extent allowable by law.

### Widening Circles

Help us spread the word about Equity Action by hosting an informational gathering in your home or business. We will provide literature and a speaker and ask guests to add their name to our mailing list. Widening Circles bring friends and colleagues together while raising awareness about this important fund.

The Million Dollar Challenge Campaign will require ongoing support from old friends and the involvement of new voices, new champions. Together we can fuel this critical state-wide endeavor, igniting change and hope for a strong, diverse Rhode Island.

**EQUITY**

**ACTION**

To learn more about Equity Action and the Million Dollar Challenge contact:

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Or view the Equity Action website at:  
[www.equityaction.org](http://www.equityaction.org)





THE RHODE ISLAND FOUNDATION

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