

# 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

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# QUEER ASTERISK

THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

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# A Letter from our Board Chair

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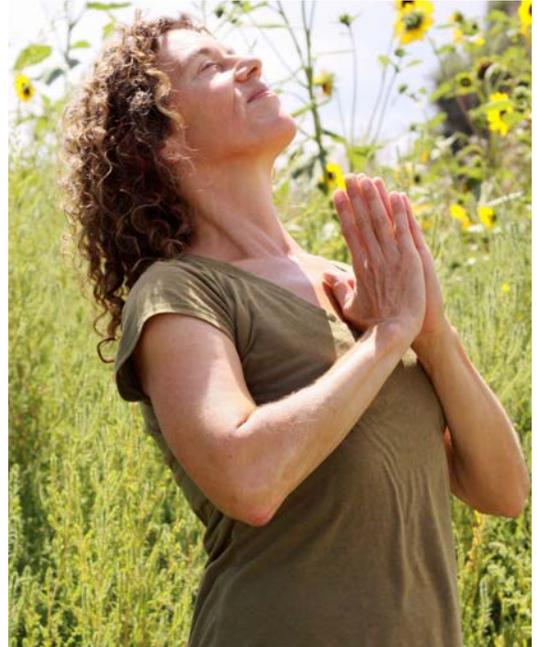
Dear Friends and Supporters,

A revolution of the heart is emerging and we are witnessing a profound shift in our worldview. Categorization and conformity no longer serve the wellbeing of individuals with complex and intersecting identities or communities that are expanding the collective consciousness. A brave new culture that embraces ambiguity, vulnerability, and authenticity is taking form; and Queer Asterisk is at the forefront of this inspiring movement.

Historically, those who have not fit into the boxes prescribed by society, including myself, have been labeled “queer” as an insult. Now, folks of all ages and especially young people are unifying around their experiences of isolation and ostracism by rigid social constructs and reclaiming “queer” as a transformational identity and expansive way of moving through the world.

In 2017, to meet a growing need for therapeutic services that honor queer resilience and vitality, Queer Asterisk provided queer-informed counseling services to over one hundred individuals and their families, launched a peer mentorship program as an affordable supplement or alternative to counseling, facilitated diversity and inclusivity trainings for more than twenty-five prominent organizations, set into motion a dozen new community groups that center queer experience, and hosted several community events that highlighted queer voices.

In 2018, we will continue to expand our therapeutic services to increase the wellbeing and interconnectedness of queer individuals and their families. Our vision is to create a sanctuary for the most vulnerable among us as well as a platform from which to propel ourselves forward. With your help, we will continue to do our part to create a world in which each and every one of us has full permission and freedom to be our most authentic selves.



Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Diane J. Israel

Diane J. Israel, MA  
Chair of the Board

# A Letter from our Founding Director

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Dear Community Members,

I was 18 years old the first time I experienced a rite of passage; four days and nights fasting solo in Death Valley, praying for a vision. I learned that rites of passage like this have two components: going out alone and coming back to the group. Both can be equally terrifying and thrilling. Going out is about discovering and claiming your intrinsic gifts. Coming back is about bringing those gifts to your people. You have to come back.

It was during a rite of passage that I first heard these words from Marianne Williamson:

*“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?”*

The vision I hold for myself, this organization, and everyone we touch is to be brilliant; to claim and reclaim, if we have to, our gifts as queer and trans folks and to bring those gifts to our people. Though we will continue to learn and grow throughout our lifetimes, at a certain point we must allow ourselves to be “good enough” and stop letting fear hold us back from putting forth something truly amazing.

What if it were your destiny to gather everything you have learned, all that you are, and give unconditional love and commitment to whatever is in your heart to do in this world? Perhaps the remedy to the annihilation we face as a community is to create something new, that only you can create, and then to watch it grow in you, and all around you.

When I founded this organization, I wanted to create a sense of home for everyone who knows the pain of looking and not finding themselves reflected in community. I think that we are doing it, together. And I could not be more proud. I hope you feel this way about something you help to create, whether it is your chosen family, a creative endeavor, or an organization that came from a vision.

Warmly,



Sorin Thomas, MA, LPC, LAC  
Founding & Executive Director



# Board Members



**Diane Israel, MA**  
(she, her, hers)  
Chair of the Board



**Atlas Tann, MDiv**  
(they, them, their)  
Board Member



**Jaxx Alutalica, MA,  
LMFT, PhD Candidate**  
(they, them, their)  
Board Member



**Kai McKenzie, PhD**  
(xe, xem, xyr)  
Board Member

## Directors



**Sorin Thomas, MA, LPC, LAC**  
(xe, xem, xyr)  
Founding & Executive Director

Sorin is a queer and transgender counselor and educator with a master's degree in Somatic Counseling Psychology from Naropa University. As founding director, Sorin's exuberance for life informs xyr visionary leadership style and has been a catalyst for xyr dream of strengthening the resilience and vibrance of queer people.



**Brett Adamek (Freeda Be), MA**  
(he, him, his)  
Director of Programming

Freeda is a queer and gender fluid counselor and community leader with a master's degree in Transpersonal Counseling Psychology from Naropa University. Freeda's inspiration for community programming derives from his commitment to promoting authentic, creative, and purposeful lives.



**Luca Pax, BA**  
(they, them, their)  
Director of Community Relations

Luca is a queer and non-binary transgender educator with a bachelor's degree in Peace Studies and Early Childhood Education from Naropa University. Luca's commitments to social justice and healing through relationship are paramount as they develop community partnerships for Queer Asterisk.



## Counselors



**Nora Ahmed-Kamal, MA, LPCC**  
(she, her, hers)  
Boulder Therapist

Nora has a master's degree in Somatic Counseling Psychology from Naropa University. Nora guides and empowers clients in the discovery and celebration of their authentic selves.



**Tracey Lamers, MA, LPCC**  
(she, her, hers)  
Boulder Therapist

Tracey has a master's degree in Transpersonal Counseling Psychology from Naropa University. Tracey offers a holistic approach to therapy that focuses on the wellbeing of body, mind, and soul.



**Yen Nguyen, MEd, LPCC**  
(she, her, hers)  
Denver Therapist

Yen has a master's degree in Counseling Psychology from the University of Louisville. Yen helps clients cultivate deeper connection to the interrelatedness of thoughts, feelings, and sensations.



**Grace Ballard, MA, LPCC**  
(she, her, hers)  
Denver Therapist

Grace has a master's degree in Contemplative Psychology from Naropa University. Grace uses mindfulness practices to support participants on their unique paths of growth and healing.



## Peer Mentors

**Stephen Ostrow, MA Candidate**  
(they, them, their) Naropa Practicum Student

**Basil Ross, MA Candidate**  
(they, them, their) Naropa Practicum Student

**Shen Hollcraft, MA Candidate**  
(they, them, their) Naropa Practicum Student

**TJay Jorden, MA Candidate**  
(they, them, their) Naropa Practicum Student



## Associates



**RP Whitmore-Bard, MA**  
(they, them, their)  
Communications Specialist



**Josie Ivy Nixon, BS**  
(she, her, hers)  
Event Coordinator

## Advisors

**Gus Spheeris, JD, LL M**  
(he, him, his) Legal Advisor

**Avani Dilger, MEd, MA, LPC, CACIII**  
(she, her, hers) Clinical Advisor

**Patricia Kay, CPA**  
(she, her, hers) Financial Advisor



# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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## QUEER

The term queer can be used to describe gender identity, sexual orientation, and so much more. At Queer Asterisk, we are always in conversation about what this term means to each of us. For some people, the term queer will always carry an association to painful slurs. For others, it is a term of endearment that has been powerfully reclaimed.

There is a growing trend towards the use of queer to describe a new approach to many experiences in life including relationships, spirituality, and professionalism. In some circles, people use the term queer to represent what is always on the threshold of change; those fluid, open, and ambiguous parts of human experience which cannot be easily named.

## TRANS (SHORT FOR TRANSGENDER)

In reference to gender, the term trans describes a gender identity that is different than the one assigned at birth. Some transgender identities exist on the binary and others are non-binary.

## NON-BINARY

The term non-binary refers to gender identities that exist outside the binary categories of man and woman. Sometimes it is used as an umbrella term for identities like genderqueer and gender fluid. Some non-binary people identify as transgender and some do not.



We tend not to use the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender acronym to describe our community. The term queer unites us, without separating us based on the sex we were assigned at birth, the way we identify and express our gender, or describe our sexual orientation.

# A GUIDE TO PRONOUNS

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At Queer Asterisk, many of our team and community members use non-binary gender pronouns other than “he” or “she” to better reflect our identities. Here are a few commonly used pronouns.

Nominative	he	she	they	xe	“zee”
Possesive	his	her	their	xyr	“zeer”
Objective	him	her	them	xem	“zem”

# OUR STORY

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In 2014, while studying Somatic Counseling Psychology at Naropa University, Sorin Thomas and two other graduate students envisioned Queer Asterisk. Their idea was to create a different kind of mental health organization; rooted in social justice advocacy, devoted to compassionate counseling and education, and run entirely by queer and transgender professionals.



While we are fortunate to have had many queer and transgender community resources available in the Denver area for years, until the founding of Queer Asterisk there was yet to exist a mental health organization where the structure and leadership was informed by queer and trans lived experience.

## OUR MISSION

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**We provide queer-informed counseling services, community programming, and educational trainings to promote the internal wellness and social connectivity of queer and trans people**

## OUR VISION

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**We envision a vibrant community that embraces authentic expression and transformation, where individuals with dynamic and intersecting identities can thrive**

# HOW WE BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER

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As a team of queer and transgender counselors and educators, we bring people of many backgrounds and identities together to heal, learn, and grow. Our counseling services and peer mentorship program bring together compassionate helpers with diverse areas of expertise to strengthen and support the next generation of queer leaders.

At schools and hospitals, our educational trainings bring professionals together to have meaningful conversations about intentionally creating safer spaces for queer and trans people. At community events, we bring queer people together in restorative ways to discover and celebrate our capacity to thrive in connection with each other.

# WHY OUR ORGANIZATION IS CRUCIAL

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As queer and trans people we are incredibly resilient. We are also a vulnerable population. In recent decades, an increase in queer and trans visibility has in some ways made the world a better place for us to live. Yet still, the following is reported:

*The U.S. Transgender Survey (2016) found that transgender people are twice as likely to be living in poverty compared to the general population and three times more likely to be unemployed. Respondents reported higher than average rates of harassment, violence and psychological distress. One-third reported issues in seeking healthcare, while 30% said they had at some time been homeless. And 40% said they had attempted to commit suicide at some point in their lifetime, compared to 4.6% of the general population.*

**from Time magazine's online edition, "Beyond Bathrooms:  
Inside the Largest Ever Survey of Transgender People in America."**

We know that queer and transgender people encounter these issues not because who we are, or who or how we love warrants it, but because we live in societies that do not accept our identities. There is an urgent need for well-informed mental and emotional health care for people like us. And there is a growing demand for education among employers, families, schools, and community leaders.



**"Queer Asterisk acts as a safe haven for queer and transgender clients and as an educational powerhouse for clinicians looking to improve their cultural competency around gender and sexual diversity. These conversations are important to have if we are to be truly prepared for the future."**

- MARC AZOULAY MA, LPC, LAC, CGP  
PRESIDENT OF THE FOUR CORNERS GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY SOCIETY

**"Thank you for all you do for Naropa and the well-being of the Boulder community. We so appreciate you!"**

- YOUR FRIENDS AT NAROPA UNIVERSITY

# COUNSELING SERVICES

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In 2017, we were proud to serve over a hundred clients, ages 4 to 65, with whom our counselors addressed a myriad of issues; everything from developing coping strategies for anxiety and depression to healing trauma, processing dysphoria, engaging in family therapy, discussing gender-affirming treatment options, and designing comprehensive self care plans. This year, we were honored to witness so many people receive our counseling services and we know there are many more factors that support mental health such as:



- Forming meaningful relationships with people who accept, understand, and celebrate us.
- Experiencing belonging in community; places where we are seen and our voices matter.
- Having permission and resources to take care of ourselves and our loved ones.
- Making a contribution to the lives of others and sharing our gifts with the world.

Our counseling team utilizes strengths-based, person-centered, trauma-informed, and evidence-based treatment modalities. Queer Asterisk counselors come from diverse backgrounds with specializations in queer theory; mindfulness and embodiment practices; body safe, sex-positive, and relationship affirming treatment; multiculturalism and social justice advocacy.

*“Receiving therapy/mental health services from Queer Asterisk has been life-changing. From the moment I sent the first email inquiring about services, I felt held and respected by their thoughtful, inclusive staff. In a day and age where fear and intolerance can run rampant, Queer Asterisk is a beacon of hope, showing what the best of humanity has to offer the LGBTQIA+ community.”*

– WOODZICK

*“I needed help for a friend. The people I spoke to here helped immediately. They were so incredibly friendly and compassionate. Actual words: ‘No matter what, we will get your friend the help he needs today.’ I cannot speak more highly of them. I haven’t felt so completely taken care of in a very long time.”*

– ANONYMOUS

## PEER MENTORSHIP

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Peer mentorship at Queer Asterisk is an affordable supplement or alternative to counseling services, designed by queer community members, and supervised by licensed mental health professionals. Peer mentors listen compassionately, provide fabulous companionship, and lend their expertise in everything from makeup to mindfulness practice.

# EDUCATIONAL TRAININGS

Queer Asterisk educators use a queer-informed and therapeutic approach to facilitate a rich learning experience for professionals invested in the physical and emotional wellbeing of queer and trans people.

In 2017, we were pleased to offer comprehensive educational trainings to over twenty-five local and regional community organizations.

2017 training sites included:

- Highlands Behavioral Health
- Boulder Valley Women's Health
- Colorado Child & Adolescent Psychiatric Society
- Colorado Group Psychotherapy Society
- Denver University
- Cherry Creek School District
- Englewood School District

## Our Purpose

Many professional organizations are beginning to recognize the need to better serve queer and transgender individuals and their families. But how can we actually create truly inclusive spaces for queer and trans people to show up authentically, have their experiences validated, and receive the best quality care possible? Our trainings offer a framework to better understand queer and trans identities, adapt inclusive policies and, most importantly, create a culture that is welcoming and healing for all.

We train because we want queer and transgender patients to be able to speak about their presenting problems, and not have to educate providers about the legitimacy of their identity; we want queer and transgender students to be able to learn and grow in safe and nurturing environments, not struggle under the oppressive weight of stigma, microaggressions, and bullying.



"I can't say enough about Sorin Thomas and Queer Asterisk! Sorin took the time to partner with us and customize the presentation to include our district's protocol and equity framework. The training was professional, interactive, relevant and very well received by our diverse audience."

- RONALD LEE, PSYD, DIRECTOR OF MENTAL HEALTH, CHERRY CREEK SCHOOLS

## Our Pedagogy

Our professional trainings strive to create safe spaces that foster rich dialogues and facilitate a level of knowing and understanding that lectures simply cannot achieve. We include time for integration of material, through case studies and process groups, to facilitate the design and implementation of professional environments that safeguard against oppressive structures and cultures. For many, it is significant to learn this material from a team of queer and transgender educators; our lived experiences tend to ground in reality what might otherwise be considered abstract concepts.

"I have been a school psychologist for a long time now, and it is rare that a training moves me and inspires me to the degree that yours did. You are beautiful examples of living life with meaning and integrity."

-ERICA STETSON, SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

# COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

Our programming creates inclusive, transformative spaces for queer and trans people to gather. As an organization rooted in collective values, we encourage community members to approach us with their ideas for groups and events.

All of our programming is facilitated by queer and trans people - either members of the director team, graduate-level practicum students, or Queer Asterisk community members. There is always a counselor or mentor present in the room, to offer additional support when needed.

## 2017 GROUPS



**Queer Conversation** is a continuation of Luca Pax's thesis work and fosters community connection through dialogue



**QTPOC Circle** is a dedicated space for Queer Trans People of Color to witness, support, and inspire one another



**Queer Room** is a non-verbal, contemplative group opportunity to be with other queer folks in a space beyond words

## 2017 EVENTS

- **Queer Space (June 2nd)**, a fundraising event at Kakes Studio in Boulder, featuring offerings by local queer & trans entrepreneurs, and a fabulous drag show.
- **Queer Nights at Buffalo Exchange (Sept 24th & October 21st)**, an after-hours queer shopping extravaganza, with a portion of proceeds donated to our organization.
- **Queer Speak (December 2nd)**, a fundraising event at madelife arts center in Boulder, featuring performances by local queer & trans poets.



**Queer Sangha** offers a supportive communal environment for meditation and contemplative spiritual practice



**Queer Writing Group** provides a structure for writers to explore, share, and cultivate their authentic voice



**Book & Film Club** facilitates discussion about media that centers queer and trans perspectives

**“I just want to briefly and publicly express gratitude towards the Queer Writing Group. As someone who’s only just recently made it through a solid 2.5 year writer’s block, this space has been a place for me to face my fears about writing on the spot, a place of nonjudgmental creative encouragement, a low-pressure place to be heard and seen and to get super super inspired by the potent creativity around me in the queer community.”**

- ANONYMOUS

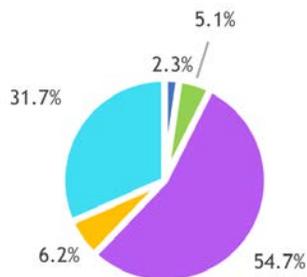
# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

January 1st, 2017 - December 31st, 2017 as compared to January 1st, 2016 - December 31st, 2016

	2017	2016
<b>REVENUE AND SUPPORT</b>		
Individual Contributions	2,698	
Foundations and Grants	6,000	
Fees for Services	64,267	14,730
Special Events	7,324	
In-Kind Donations	37,200	
<b>Total Revenue and Support</b>	<b>\$ 117,489</b>	<b>\$ 14,730</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Program Services	81,763	14,975
<b>SUPPORT SERVICES</b>		
Fundraising Expense	14,834	-
Management and General	38,739	4,077
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 135,336</b>	<b>\$ 19,052</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>(17,847)</b>	<b>(4,322)</b>
Net Assets, Beginning of the Year	(5,638)	(1,315)
Net Assets, End of Year	<b>\$ (23,485)</b>	<b>\$ (5,637)</b>

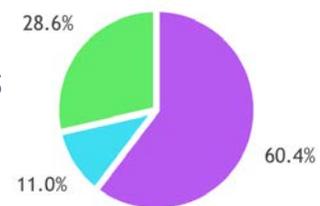
(unaudited)

## 2017 Revenue & Support



- Individual Contributions
- Foundations and Grants
- Fees for Services
- Special Events
- In-Kind Donations

## 2017 Expenses



- Program Services
- Fundraising Expense
- Management and General

Queer Asterisk successfully increased its revenue by 798% from 2016 to 2017. Fees for Services was a major source of revenue in 2017 at a 430% increase from 2016; however, our efforts to establish additional revenue streams contributed to a more balanced increase in total revenue. We will continue to support this balance through an increase in fundraising efforts in 2018.

## 2017 SPONSORS

Highlands Behavioral Health  
Buffalo Exchange

## 2017 PARTNERS

OUT Boulder  
GLBT Center of Colorado  
Love, Sex, and Gender Center  
Vibrant  
Natural Highs  
Fortuna Chocolate  
Four Corners Group Psychotherapy Society  
Heritage Camps For Adoptive Families  
Open Sky Wilderness Therapy  
Boulder Writers Warehouse

## 2017 IN-KIND DONORS

Naropa University  
Kakes Studios  
Madelife  
Celestial Seasonings  
Dairy Center for the Arts  
Boulder County AIDS Project  
KGNU Community Radio  
Comedy Works  
Little Yoga Studio  
Myra Makes  
City O' City  
Boss Lady Pizza  
Sprouts Farmers Market  
WoodGrain Bagels  
Pizzeria da Lupo  
Smashburger  
Yellowbelly  
Teavana  
Fior Gelato  
KT's BBQ  
PizzaRev  
Illegal Pete's  
Foolish Craig's  
Moonlight Offerings  
Conscious Cleanse  
Leigh Fondakowski  
Megan Lusardi Massage  
Zinke Hair Studios  
Miss Major Griffin-Gracy

# A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

## 2017 DONORS

Kristin Lindquist  
Patricia Kay  
Reaca Pearl  
Avi Kolbrener  
Clyderae Jolie Ashe  
The Wellingtons  
The Whiting Family  
Diane Israel  
Gus Spheeris  
Dana Derichsweiler  
Lawhead Family  
Cass Lange  
Jane Patrick  
Kit Colorado  
Debbie Carter  
Michael Modresky  
Ruth & Pedro McMillan  
Nancy Gavlin  
Hormel Foundation  
Gavlin Family Foundation

## 2017 VOLUNTEERS

Ash Ruiz  
Rock Larsen  
Alyson Calagna  
Garrett Smith  
Madè Beautiful  
Trevor Andrews  
Ethen Woolf  
Caroline Swanson  
Megan McCullough  
Eliot Kersgaard  
Leah Samuels  
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Pinar Ateş Sinopoulos-Lloyd  
Spencer Bowie  
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Raine Revere  
Reaca Pearl  
Blair Stapp  
Sway  
Lior Gross  
Blake Marcelle  
Trace McManus  
Penny Logue  
Natalie Sharp  
Sarah Connell  
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Laura Miess  
Allison Blakeney  
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Angelica Barraza  
Laura Malaver  
Theo Spain  
C Ryan Williams  
Chris Aguilar Garcia  
Will Betke-Bruswick  
Anna Domatila  
Leah Samuels  
Michael Benko  
Sarah Colbert  
Katy Caballero  
Stevie Reyes  
Elena Schmeising  
Syd Fischer  
Kristina Kiley  
Keri Scarfone  
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