Descriptive Summary
Title: The Center
Dates: 1969-2005
Collection Number: L1989.01
Extent: 13 linear feet
Repository: Lambda Archives of San Diego
San Diego, California 92116
Abstract: The Gay Center for Social Services (GCSS), a.k.a. The Center, is a non-profit organization created with the intent to meet the needs of the LGBT community in San Diego. The Center was founded in 1972 by Bernard Michaels, Thom Carey, Jess Jessop, Patricia Byers, Patricia Clutchy, Peggy Heathers, Clint Johnson, George Murphy, Jerry Peterson, Gary Rees, John Senter, Jerry White, John Eberly, Gary Gulley, and Cynthia Lawrence. Michaels, a student of the School of Social Work at San Diego State University, centered his dissertation on the development and establishment of The Center and its services. The Center was intended to provide much needed health, counseling, and educational services to their community. Because The Center was founded by members of the gay community, for the community, it could provide these services without discrimination, judgement, or shame for those seeking their assistance. The founders recognized that the LGBT community needed a place where the community could go for help without fear of exposure, arrest, or hostility towards their lifestyle at a time in which discovery of their identity could lead to severe consequences in their personal lives, particularly with employers.
Language of Material: English
Access
Open for Research
Preferred Citation
The Center. Lambda Archives of San Diego
Biography/Administrative History
The Gay Center for Social Services (GCSS), a.k.a. The Center, is a non-profit organization created with the intent to meet the needs of the LGBT community in San Diego. The Center was founded in 1972 by Bernard Michaels, Thom Carey, Jess Jessop, Patricia Byers, Patricia Clutchy, Peggy Heathers, Clint Johnson, George Murphy, Jerry Peterson, Gary Rees, John Senter, Jerry White, John Eberly, Gary Gulley, and Cynthia Lawrence. Michaels, a student of the School of Social Work at San Diego State University, centered his dissertation on the development and establishment of The Center and its services. The original Center was opened in 1973 and was located at 2250 B Street in Golden Hill before moving to 1447 N 30th Street—also in Golden Hill—in 1980. The Center would not stay on 30th Street for long, moving later in 1980 to 3780 Fifth Ave., where they would remain for the next twelve years until their move to 3916 Normal Street building in October 1992. The Center moved to its current location in Hillcrest—as of March 2019—at 3909 Center Street in 1999. The Center was intended to provide much needed health, counseling, and educational services to their community. Because The Center was founded by members of the gay community, for the community, it could provide these services without discrimination, judgement, or shame for those seeking their assistance. The founders recognized that the LGBT community needed a place where the community could go for help without fear of exposure, arrest, or hostility towards their lifestyle at a time in which discovery of their identity could lead to severe consequences in their personal lives, particularly with employers. The Center’s initial programs included a hotline for information on their services and crisis intervention, counseling in “Rap groups” or one-on-one sessions, educational programs including a speaker’s bureau and a lending library, and a prisoner parole and probation program for LGBT prisoners. The Center would later expand their services to include a Military Counseling program, the Lesbian Health Project, the Holistic AIDS Response Program (HARP), and a variety of other programs and workshops. To raise funds for these services and their establishment, The Center and the LGBT community put together a variety of events including original theater shows, such as “On the Road”, block parties, auctions, and film festivals, hosted primarily in LGBT operated businesses. Over time, The Center would develop many taskforces to combat issues faced by the LGBT community, including HIV/AIDS, domestic violence in gay and lesbian relationships, violent crime, and human rights. In 1992, The Center would partner with law enforcement in San Diego to provide Gay and Lesbian Cultural Awareness training as well as a Sexual Orientation training course. The Center for Social Services has since opened multiple affiliated Centers including the North County Center in 1996 and the Hillcrest Youth Center in 2000.
Scope and Content of Collection
This collection consists of materials relating to The Gay and Lesbian Center for Social Services (GCSS) (a.k.a., The Center) located in San Diego. Materials include founding documents, letters, board minutes, board and committee reports, administrative materials (contact lists, schedules, intern and volunteer lists, mailing lists, etc.), pride documents, newsletters, financial documents, papers, and pamphlets. Dates of the documents range from approximately 1969 to 2005. This collection includes original founding documents from Bernard Michaels and Thom Carey, articles of incorporation, bylaws, policies, and business license. Correspondence includes letters, statements, postcards, and event invitations. Other materials include newspaper clippings, a scrap book, program booklets, and flyers for Center related events.

**Indexing Terms**
- Lesbian Health Project
- Holistic AIDS Response Program (HARP)
- LGBT counseling
- LGBT mental health services
- LGBT health services
- gay military counseling
- Jeri Dilno
- Bruce Kamerling
- Concerned Citizens for AIDS Patients
- San Diego

[The Center Inventory]