

Throughout PRIDE Month, CTI will feature profiles of local LGBTQ+ leaders to celebrate #LowellLGBTQExcellence by learning about their experiences, perspectives, and the wisdom they share in our local communities.

CTI Celebrates Local LGBTQ+ Leader of Excellence ~ TOM ELLIS

Nominated by Barbara Warren, Division Director, Housing & Homeless Services

Barbara shared, *“Tom Ellis is my brother-in-law, and for the past several years, he has conducted training for our staff through MASSCAP on coaching and boundaries.”*

What is your title/role/organization and/or involvement in the community?

MASSCAP Trainer/Professional & Personal Development Coach (Life Coach), End of Life Companion/Guide, Mediator, Farmer, and Artist. I am the owner of Tom Ellis Coaching. Examples of training provided were on topics such as Setting professional Boundaries, coaching skills, and Communicating with Difficult people.

What does Pride Month Mean to you?

Pride month is all about affirming and validating members of the LGBTQIA+ communities around the world. It is an invitation to celebrate, share and reflect upon the teachings and learnings of our past and share our visions and dreams for the future. It is a chance to be ourselves in a world of amazing diversity. Diversity invites so much to the human experiences.

What can the community do more of to recognize Pride during the year?

Keep the rainbow flag flying throughout the year. Incorporate pride-related theme activities into opportunities where diversity appreciation/awareness is being encouraged and celebrated. Recognize members of the community beyond the month of pride. Offer webinars and onsite training to staff/community members where possible.

What advice would you give to future generations of leaders in the community, especially those who identify as LGBTQ+?

Listen and honor the community’s ancestors, who have walked hard paths for you to be where you are. Listen to the wisdom of your history. Find yourself a mentor and be a mentor to others. Build solid relationships with others across the spectrum in the community. Educate and spread the truth in the face of technical/digital challenges, such as fake news, AI, etc.

What has been the most rewarding part of your commitment to the community?

The most rewarding part of my contribution to the community is to be a power of example. In other words, to do the very thing to stand on my truth and to embark upon others empowering knowledge. The legacy I leave behind is to make it possible for others to have theirs.

How have you seen your efforts make a positive difference in people's lives?

The most common feedback of such was during and after the training. There have been times when I would get emails from participants and their leaders. One example that comes to mind was when I was at a local food market, and a former participant came up to me and said that she wanted to let me know that she took helpful notes a long time ago and they are still useful and thanked me. Finally, another indicator of making a positive difference in participants' lives is when I am called back to facilitate additional custom training.

How did you become inspired to make a difference in your community?

When I was younger and facing the daunting yet painful task of coming out, I found refuge in the Unitarian Universalists (UU) community. It was in that community, some 30 years ago, where I learned that they were LGBTQAI+ allies. I decided to pay forward and be an ally to others where needed.

What do you hope to accomplish in the future to further your positive impact?

To continue what I am doing today and hope that the information and experiences I share will ripple out to others in helpful ways. I hope others are afforded the same opportunity as others, which is to stand in and speak their truth(s).

What would you say are the most important qualities needed to become a leader in the community?

I believe that the following are qualities of a leader: Self-Care practices, compassion and empathy for others, ability to lead from behind, effective communication and problem-solving skills, willingness to step beyond the comfort zone, ability to work with other leaders across and beyond existing community lines, and most importantly, ability to utilize humor effectively.

How has your experience as an LGBTQ+ person influenced your work?

When I am able to stand in my truth, I am able to empower others to stand in their truth. My life purpose is to help others to find their purposes.

What advice would you give to other young LGBTQ+ people looking to make a difference in their communities?

Seek out a mentor immediately. Know your truth. Honor the many truths within and outside our community. Use knowledge to fuel and share the truth. Love one another. Know the other side's position better than theirs and offer win/win solutions. Laugh often. Make self-love/care your number one priority. Think outside the box and be willing to make and learn from your mistakes.

What was the most difficult obstacle you had to overcome to become a leader in your community?

As a CPTSD survivor, I have had to learn many ways to heal and move forward. Specifically, learning to recognize when I am triggered in my work and developing and applying healthy boundary skills. As a leader, the hardest thing to do is to know my limits and when to ask for and receive help from others. This allows me to be able to be fully available to those I serve.

#LowellLGBTQplusExcellence #PRIDE #CommunityLeader #Leadership #DEIatCTI
#PRIDEMonth2023 #Appreciation #Grateful #CTIPride #PrideMonth