

- For Wide Release -

**O'Connor Gallery** challenges community members to join in a philanthropic opportunity for LGBTTT youth!

O'Connor Gallery is making a substantial monthly donation to SOY's many talented youth of Fruit Loopz Youth Stage at Pride.

A program of Sherbourne Health Centre since September 2004, **SOY** is a dynamic youth oriented program that works to improve the lives of LGBTTT youth in Toronto through the active involvement of adults working together with youth. We create healthy arts, cultural and recreational spaces for young people; provide supportive housing and employment opportunities; and increase youth access to adult mentoring and support.

Since its founding in 1995 **The O'Connor Gallery at 145 Berkeley St.** has contributed to Toronto's rich cultural scene. Ten new exhibitions each year feature artists from Canada and abroad working in a variety of mediums. The gallery's three thousand square foot space in Toronto's historic Queen Street East neighbourhood, houses two exhibition spaces, art storage and frame shop.

"The Gallery has always supported **SOY** by donating to their amazing arts festival Initiative at Pride, and I want to let others know about this and encourage them to do the same", Geoff Person said.

"The O'Connor Gallery's generous sponsorship of SOY will take the form of a **\$200 monthly donation** which, accumulated over the year will amount to a significant contribution towards a vital program that relies on the community for financial support; a significant link to building bridges between SOY and our GTA communities' said **Lorelei King, SOY's Coordinator of Community Programs.**

"**Fruit Loopz** is a creative and unique program to the countless **LGBTTT youth** we work with, and contributes to a youth friendly & **safe space during Pride.** Fruit Loopz is a youth volunteer oriented program that takes place annually at Pride. To be able to count on the ongoing support of the community as we start planning the year ahead makes an invaluable difference.

Many of our young people face multiple challenges in addition to homophobia and transphobia. Some are homeless, without work and face discrimination in many forms, including lack of family support. **Fruit Loopz**, provides the opportunity for **LGBTTT** youth to showcase their many artistic talents and performances, often for the first time in a supportive, youth-friendly environment. Many performers have gone on to become professional artists. Fruit Loopz is their chance to develop their craft and build confidence and experience as well as feeling validated, respected and accepted for who they are," said King.

For more information:

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