



Equality Pennsylvania

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Harrisburg - Just breaking from the Philadelphia Gay News. Equality PA couldn't be more pleased and honored. Reprinted with permission from the Philadelphia Gay News.

People of the Year: Ted Martin & Adrian Shanker

by PGN Staff /January 5, 2011

Ted Martin and Adrian Shanker, the duo at the helm of Equality Pennsylvania, were at the forefront of the movement to bring LGBT nondiscrimination to Pennsylvania cities and towns in 2011.

This year, eight municipalities approved LGBT nondiscrimination ordinances, and Martin, executive director, and Shanker, board president, were heavily involved in advancing each measure.

Equality PA leadership was present at nearly all council hearings and meetings on the proposals and, in many instances, worked closely with local lawmakers to craft the language for the ordinances, as well as raise awareness about the importance of such measures.

“They are certainly two of the most critical players statewide that have worked on these ordinances,” said Brian Sims, former Equality PA board president. “If they weren't leading the effort in one municipality, they were second-behind the local leaders providing support. Their imprint is on every one of the municipal nondiscrimination ordinances that were passed this year.”

Following this year's victories, Pennsylvania is now home to 26 municipalities that ban LGBT discrimination.

Equality PA has remained dedicated to heightening that number, offering vocal leadership to areas considering adopting their own measures, such as Cheltenham, and continuing to work with municipalities like Abington that have stalled proposals.

Andy Hoover, legislative director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania, said the agency's plan to advance LGBT equality at the local level, given the long-stalled statewide LGBT nondiscrimination bill, has been a purposeful and effective one.

"Ted and Adrian and all of the folks at Equality PA have been very strategic and very smart about where they're putting their efforts," Hoover said. "They're finding the places that they know they can win and have been able to take it outside of Southeastern Pennsylvania to places like Susquehanna and Bethlehem. These ordinances are going to be really important to the future of LGBT equality in Pennsylvania."

Prior to taking over as board president in September, Shanker served as vice president of the Pennsylvania Diversity Network and this year helped lead the effort to pass Bethlehem's nondiscrimination ordinance, as well as domestic-partner measures in Allentown and Easton.

Martin came on as executive director in mid-2010 after a period of instability that included the resignation of two directors and a number of board members, and later a name change and other programmatic updates.

Sims said Martin successfully brought the agency through those transitions.

"The state needed a statewide gay-rights organization and over months and months of bringing in donors, volunteers and thought leaders, we were able to build what I thought of as the frame of a really solid ship, and a ship is only as good as its captain," Sims said. "Ted ended up being a spectacular captain of the ship. He came in and on day one began making structural and organizational changes and really moved the organization forward. He had a unique skill set, knew all of Pennsylvania, knew gay rights and advocacy, knew how to raise money and this was the place where he could bring all of that together. I don't think there is anyone in the state, or even the country, who would have been able to have done a better job than him."

Hoover also said the agency is in a much different place today than it was in 2010.

"It's been astounding the way Ted has taken every effort to make Equality Pennsylvania a very effective organization," he said. "Ted, Adrian and everyone at Equality Pennsylvania have essentially rebooted the organization and they've been able to do some incredible work."

Equality Pennsylvania is the statewide voice for LGBT Equality in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and works collaboratively to establish a comprehensive network of individuals and organizations united in securing equal rights for the LGBT community. For more information: www.equalitypa.org. Equality Pennsylvania is a proud member of the Equality Federation.

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