

## LGBTQ+ Resource Center Opens In Billings

<https://www.mtpr.org/post/lgbtq-resource-center-opens-billings>

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Originally published on March 26, 2019 9:11 am



*Shauna Goubeaux stands in front of a bookcase she painted herself in the new 406 Pride resource center*

CREDIT KAYLA DESROCHES / YPR

A resource center for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer people, and their allies, held its grand opening in Billings this weekend.

At least 50 people gathered in a bright and colorful room inside the Billings First Congregational Church downtown. It's the site of nonprofit 406 Pride's new resource center, a future hangout and safe space for LGBTQ people in the Billings area.

406 Pride started the grant-writing and fundraising process last year, and much of the interior is hand-made, from the rainbow-painted bookcase to the large wood and metal table near it.

At the grand opening Saturday afternoon, Pastor Lisa Harmon with Billings First Congregational Church was one of those to stand in front of the crowd and give a blessing.

“Today, we say that this rainbow of sexuality and gender is a gift to this church, to Billings, Montana, this rocky mountain region, and to the world,” said Harmon.

406 Pride president, Shauna Goubeaux, said they chose this particular space partly because it’s centrally located and partly because it has a separate bathroom and entrance independent of the church.

She acknowledges that the relationship between churches and the LGBTQ community hasn’t always been an easy one.

Goubeaux looks back at a time when she could have used the support a resource center like this one could have provided.

Six years ago, she and her wife were trying to adopt and faced resistance from church-run adoption agencies, which she says at the time were the only options in Billings.

“We had to hire an attorney and find a way to be able to adopt our son,” said Goubeau. “And a center like this would have given us someplace to go and say, how do we do this, who do we reach out to, how do we get this started?”

Goubeaux says while gay rights and activism is still highly political, the resource center is not intended as a political space. Every identity, and everyone, is welcome, and Goubeau says it’s about making LGBTQ people feel seen.

Jace Dyckman is with Southeast Montana Prime Timers, a group for older gay men.

He says while he has felt welcomed in the coffee shops and other venues where the group meets, he looks forward to having an established space.

He says he'd also like to better connect with other members of the LGBTQ community, including younger gay people who may feel isolated and alone.

"I think when you can look at older gay community members and see they're happy and they're successful, it gives you hope," said Dyckman. "So, I'm hoping if they can come here and see that the older gay community in Billings is happy and successful, that they can see a future for themselves."

According to the Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services, LGBTQ youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual youth, and last year Montana was found to have the highest suicide rate in the country.

406 Pride has a number of events coming up in their new space, including game nights, movie nights, and a youth prom.

*Edit 3/26:* A former version of this article misspelled the name of 406 Pride's president, Shauna Goubeaux, and the spelling has since been corrected.