

Hate Free Outagamie wants to build more LGBTQ inclusivity

Sophia Voight

Appleton Post-Crescent
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

APPLETON - Following weeks of protests to bring disciplinary action against an Outagamie County Board member who used transphobic language during a meeting, a new organization has emerged to tackle anti-trans rhetoric and bring more LGBTQ+ inclusivity to the county.

"A lot of us as LGBTQ individuals have felt unsafe in the Fox Cities for a long time and it was really time to form a coalition to protect ourselves and others in the community," founding member Mary Blackburn said at a press conference Thursday.

Hate Free Outagamie is a coalition of local activists — some of who are also involved with other groups such as Appleton Students for a Democratic Society and Freedom Road Socialist Organization — to "stand up against hate in all forms."

The group formed after Outagamie County Board member Timothy Hermes made transphobic comments during a May 9 County Board meeting, stating he finds transgender people and their use of bathrooms that align with their gender "disgusting."

Members of Hate Free Outagamie and other area activists protested the board member's comments for weeks, eventually leading to his official censure by the



Local activist stand outside Outagamie County Government Center to protest transphobic comments made by county board member Timothy Hermes SOPHIA VOIGHT/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

county board, but they say that action isn't enough.

The group said they are working to get Hermes removed from his seat on the Public Safety Committee and eventually to get him to resign or not get reelected to the board.

Hermes did not immediately respond to The Post-Crescent with comment on the group's call for resignation.

In addition, the group is working toward building a more inclusive county for LGBTQ+ folks and other marginalized groups.

Some of its initial goals include advocating for more gender-affirming health care access and making it easier to get legal name and gender marker changes.

"These are crucial steps in dismantling systemic barriers that hinder the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals in Outagamie County," Blackburn said.

Transgender individuals are three times more likely than other groups to feel they don't belong in the Fox Cities and LGBTQ people are 2.6 times more likely to feel they don't belong, according to 2021 data released from Imagine Fox Cities.

The organization will have its first meeting at 7 p.m. June 9 in room 105 at Lawrence University's Memorial Hall to discuss what actions the group plans to take next.

"We encourage everyone to attend and actively participate in building a more inclusive and just society," Blackburn said. "Together we will challenge and dismantle the systemic barriers that hinder the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals striving towards a future of true equality and acceptance."

Sophia Voight is a local government and political reporter with The Post-Crescent. She can be reached with tips and feedback at svoight@postcrescent.com. Follow her on Twitter @sophia_voight.

Dane County could become a 'sanctuary' for transgender people

Nathaniel Rosenberg

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

For Dane County Supervisor Rick Rose, the constituent call he received was unlike anything he had dealt with in his time in office.

The call came from a mother in his district, fearing for the emotional well-being of her 13-year-old transgender son had seen news about rights being taken away and was fearful he would not be able to receive the medical care he needed.

"This one hit me at the heart, this one hit me directly," Rose, who is gay, said of the call.

Rose introduced a resolution to make Dane County a sanctuary for transgender and nonbinary people, amid what LGBTQ advocates describe as a historic nationwide attack on the rights of LGBTQ people nationwide.

Thirty-one out of 37 county supervisors, including Rose, have already expressed their support for the resolution, which will be voted on in the coming weeks in a county that is a leading liberal bastion of the state.

The resolution is mostly focused on stating the county's support for transgender and nonbinary individuals. It also instructs local law enforcement to make enforcement of any potential prohibitions on gender-affirming care — including puberty blockers, hormone therapy, and gender-confirmation surgery — the lowest enforcement priority for the sheriff's office.



The LGBTQ (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) flag is painted on State Street outside the Capitol in Madison on Jan. 22. Dane County, including Madison, is looking to become the first county in the state to declare itself a "sanctuary" for transgender and nonbinary people. MIKE DE SISTI / MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

A problem that municipalities in Wisconsin face is the lack of power they have relative to the state government, whose laws preempt theirs, explained Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway, a supporter of the resolution.

But a tool they can use is deciding what kinds of cases law enforcement chooses to prioritize within the limitations of their time and resources, she said.

"I think the chief put it really well at one point

(when he said) he's not a doctor, his officers are not doctors and they are not equipped to understand whether somebody is accessing care in a way that is appropriate or not," Rhodes-Conway said, referring to Madison Police Chief Shon Barnes.

Similar resolutions have been passed in recent years in Kansas City, Austin, and Harris County, which is home to Houston.

Both the Dane County Sheriff and the Dane County District Attorney declined to comment for this article.

For Madison Ald. Dina Nina Martinez-Rutherford, who is the first openly trans woman to hold office in Madison, even the messaging portion of the resolution, which affirms Dane County's "commitment to protect transgender and nonbinary individuals," is significant.

"If I had a family and surroundings that understood and accepted me, I believe that I would have been able to accomplish a lot of things that I have, in my whole being, a lot sooner," Martinez-Rutherford said.

She expressed hope that the resolution would allow trans youth in Madison to feel the acceptance they need and said she planned to introduce a similar resolution for the Madison Common Council.

'A hostile political landscape'

For AJ Hardie, who is trans and the program director of the OutReach LGBTQ+ Community Center in Madison, the resolution comes at a particularly difficult moment for transgender people, both in Wisconsin and across the United States.

Hardie cited the increase in recent years legislation that attempts to ban trans individuals from receiving certain types of medical care or weakens non-discrimination laws against trans people.

More than 490 such bills have been introduced nationwide, according to the American Civil Liberties Union, though none so far this year in Wisconsin.

"To be such a small minority of the population and to receive so much negative attention, so much hate and vitriol and really dangerous language and action too, a lot of it is a backlash to what has been perceived as growing social acceptance," Hardie said.

A study by the Williams Institute at UCLA Law School found that 1.4% of American youth identify as transgender. For adults, the number is just 0.5% of the total population.

Wisconsin Republicans reversed a ban on counselors practicing conversion therapy in January — a practice of attempting to change a gay person's sexual orientation. Lawmakers argued the state had overstepped its authority by offering the ban.

Democrats opposed the measure, citing research that showed the practice's harmful effects on the mental health of patients.

And in 2022, Rep. Scott Allen, R-Waukesha, introduced legislation to bar doctors from performing gender confirmation surgery for anyone under 18.

The legislation did not pass last year, but Allen told the Journal Sentinel he is planning to introduce a similar measure later in the session.

Allen declined to comment on the Dane County resolution but said his desire to ban gender confirmation surgery for minors is an effort to protect youth.

"We want to help people who need help," Allen said. "We want to provide the resources and support and the love that they need, while not resorting to drastic measures that are permanent that they may someday regret." He cited the fact that Sweden, an early adopter of gender-affirming care for trans youth, had backed away from the practice in 2023.

Allen also likened gender dysphoria to anorexia, saying, "what if we affirmed the anorexic's belief? That is medical malpractice."

Hardie disagreed, citing studies that show that transgender youth who receive gender-affirming care have lower rates of depression and suicide.

Hardie argued that the issue at hand was one of bodily autonomy, as did Rhodes-Conway and Martinez-Rutherford.

"Any healthcare decision that an individual makes should be between that individual and their medical providers," Hardie said.

James Madara, a doctor who serves as the CEO of the American Medical Association, wrote a letter to the National Governors Association in April 2021 warning that passing legislation similar to Allen's would represent a "dangerous governmental intrusion into the practice of medicine" that could hurt transgender children.

Obituaries

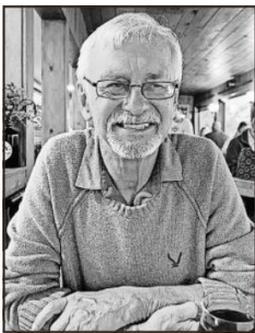
TODAY'S OBITUARIES AND DEATH NOTICES

Name	Age	Town, State	Death Date	Arrangements
*Horan, Andrew Frederick	76	Pinehurst	10-May	-

*** Additional information in display obituaries**
Obituaries appear in print and online at www.PostCrescent.com/Obituaries

Andrew Frederick Horan

PINEHURST - With deep sorrow and much love, we mourned the passing of Andrew Frederick Horan, of Pinehurst, NC on Wednesday, May 10, at the age of 76 years.



Andrew was born February 15, 1947 in Mimon, Czechoslovakia, son of the late Horomir and Helen Horan. His family immigrated to the United States in 1956, and his formative years were spent first in Chicago, IL and later Red Granite, WI. In Red Granite Andrew developed a lifelong passion for nature and the outdoors. Andrew spent his 34 year career as a teacher at Huntley Elementary in Appleton, WI, known for his warmth, zany sense of humor, and passion for igniting children's curiosity about the world. At Huntley Elementary he met Janet Beckman - his future beloved wife. The two were married on June 16, 1978 and enjoyed 33 wonderful years together until Janet's passing in 2012. Andrew retired from teaching in 2005 and spent his subsequent years enjoying his creative pursuits, sharing time with loved ones, and delighting in the discovery of his long lost family in Australia. He will be remembered as a teller of tales, an irrepressible maverick, a gifted educator, and a good man.

Andrew is survived by his sons, Nicholas Horan and Thomas Horan; partner Zaydee Cordova; grandchildren Asher, Thea, and Orion; siblings Milena Horan-Klemens and Martin Horacek; as well as many nieces, nephews, former students, and wonderful friends.

A memorial is scheduled from noon to 6 pm on Friday, June 30th, 2023 at the Chris Brandt Shelter in Plamann Park. Casual attire is encouraged.

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Sympathy

