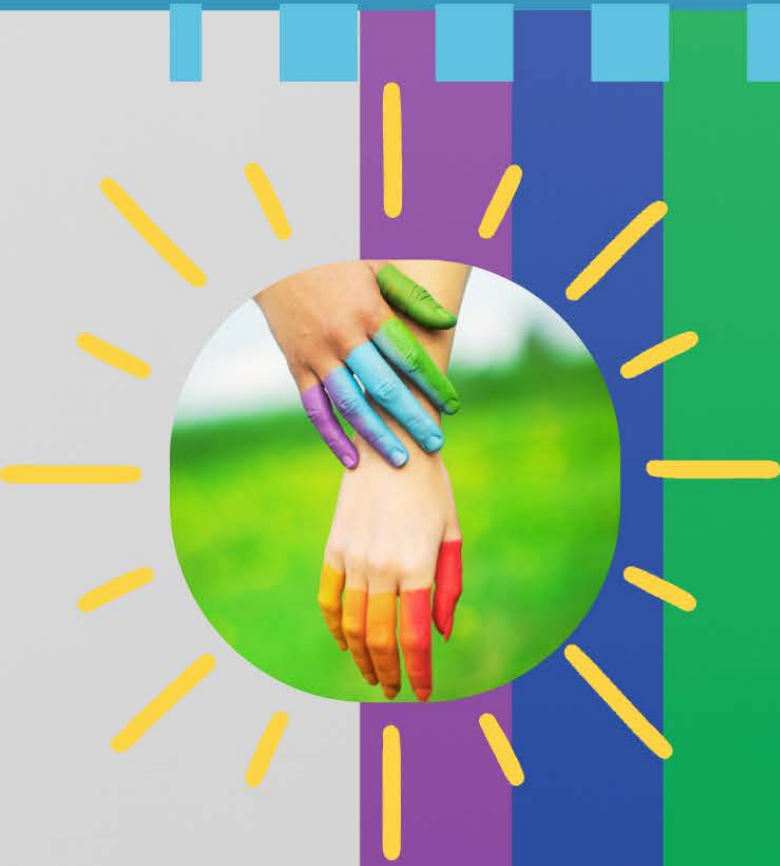


# LGBTQ Fund of Mississippi Fund Memo



Spring/Summer 2025



Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we move through the first few months of 2025, we're filled with gratitude for the strength and spirit of our community. Your unwavering support has helped us launch new initiatives, amplify voices across Mississippi, and bring critical resources to LGBTQ individuals in our state. In this Fund Memo, we're excited to share highlights from the first part of the year and a glimpse into what's ahead!

Together, we are building a Mississippi where everyone can thrive! Happy Pride!!!

In solidarity,

**Robin Webb**  
Advisory Board Chair, LGBTQ Fund of Mississippi

## 2025 - 2026 Grants - 2

Funding is available to support planning, research, and general operations that address priority needs of LGBTQ Mississippians as they strive to live safely, openly and without alienation, isolation, prejudice and/or discrimination.

## Honoring Wanda Henson - 3

## 2024 Needs Assessment - 4

The 2024 Mississippi LGBTQ+ Statewide Needs Assessment is available at [www.lgbtqfundms.org/resources](http://www.lgbtqfundms.org/resources). Check out key findings and how organizations are working to improve the life of LGBTQIA+ Mississippians and amplify youth voices!

## Funding Forward 2025 - 5 & 6

We recently attended the Funding Forward 2025 conference in Houston, presented by Funders for LGBTQ Issues.

## NYC House Party - 7

A hosted "House Party" fundraiser in New York City brought people together to connect and learn about the work we are doing.

## Grantee Spotlight - 8

TRANS Program is working to improve transgender and gender non-conforming / non-binary lives, in Mississippi.



# 2025 - 2026 Grants

## WHEN AN "EITHER/OR" BECOMES AN "AND"

When The LGBTQ Fund of Mississippi was first launched all resources raised went directly into the grantmaking fund. This was by design since there was a commitment to address the needs of LGBTQ Mississippians as quickly and effectively as possible. The team that designed The Fund, however, had built in a threshold above which 10% of any gift would go into an endowment, leaving 90% for grantmaking. That threshold was set at \$100,000 in the grantmaking fund, and it was met within the first year of The Fund's existence. As a result of that strategic policy decision The Fund has not only been able to make meaningful grants each year, it has also been building an endowment fund that will ensure long-term stability and grantmaking ability. We believe the soundness of The Fund's approach – building both grantmaking AND endowment – is critical as it strategically moves The Fund from having to choose either the grantmaking fund OR the endowment fund to being able to assure donors their gift is contributing to both grantmaking AND long-term stability for The Fund.

As The Fund completes its fifth year of grantmaking and fourth year of endowment building you will begin to see more information about the importance of growing the endowment fund, beginning with this newsletter article. There is currently \$113,394 in the endowment fund, and the goal is to get the balance at least to \$1,000,000 at which point it begins to generate annual income capable of ensuring long-term sustainability for The Fund. Obviously there is a long way to go before reaching the \$1M goal, and the challenge is to be careful that achieving this goal does not negatively impact the grantmaking ability.

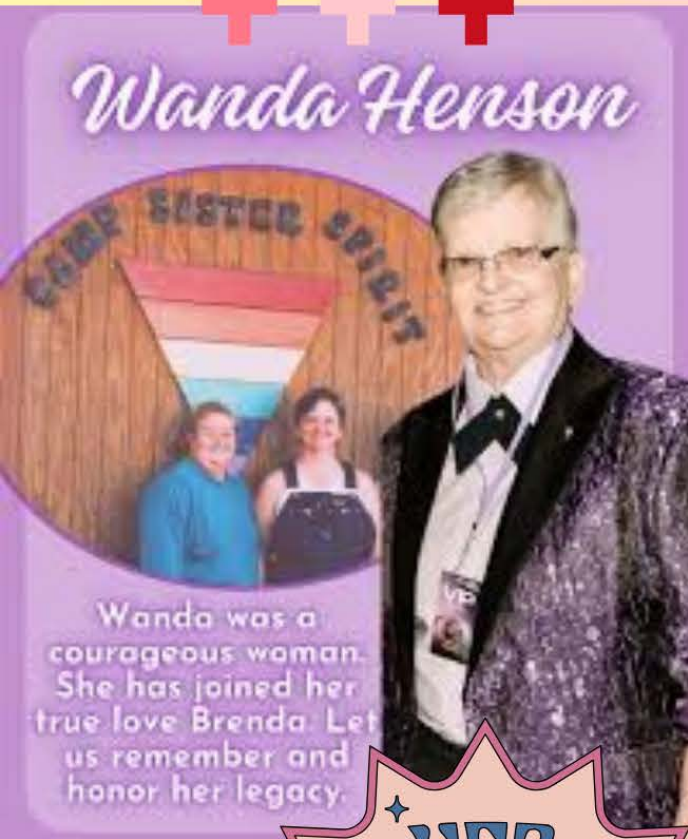
We are more than happy to answer questions you may have about either the grantmaking or endowment funds, and please know that your gifts to both are appreciated. There is so much yet to be done, and we are grateful for your commitment to making good things happen for LGBTQ Mississippians.



For more information regarding eligible applicants please see the Request For Proposal (RFP) guidelines and submission details at [www.lgbtfundms.org/grants](http://www.lgbtfundms.org/grants).



# Honoring Wanda Henson & the Legacy of Camp Sister Spirit



We honor the life and legacy of Wanda Henson (1954–2025) — a bold visionary, fierce feminist, and lifelong advocate for lesbian visibility, safety, and sisterhood. Wanda, alongside her beloved partner Brenda Henson (1945–2012), co-founded Camp Sister Spirit, a sanctuary for lesbian women and allies to gather, heal, and organize in the heart of rural Mississippi.

Wanda and Brenda built more than a retreat center. They built a movement — rooted in radical love, feminist ideals, community care, and an unwavering commitment to justice. At a time when being out and outspoken in the South could bring violence and isolation, the Hensons chose visibility, resistance, and joy. Camp Sister Spirit was a haven for women across the country seeking safety, community, and a place to belong. It became not just a refuge — but a rallying cry for queer liberation in the Deep South.

Wanda's work lives on in the countless lives she touched and the doors she opened for generations to come. She leave behind a legacy that lives in every woman who found home under the pines of Ovett, and in every queer Mississippian dreaming of a freer world.

We send love to Wanda's family, friends, and the extended Sister Spirit community. May we continue her work with the same fire and grace that defined her life. May that fire continue to burn in all of us.





# 2024 Needs Assessment



- Safety and Fear
- Communities and Workplaces
- Families
- Schools
- Mental Wellness
- Physical Wellness

The 2024 Mississippi LGBTQ+ Statewide Needs Assessment  
can be found on our website:

[www.lgbtqfundms.org/resources](http://www.lgbtqfundms.org/resources)

Check out key findings and how organizations are working  
to improve the life of LGBTQIA+ Mississippians +and  
amplify youth voices!







# Funding Forward 2025



**Growing Southern Youth Focused  
LGBTQ+ Communities**





# Funding Forward 2025

On April 1st, our Needs Assessment team, Dr. Melanie Walsh and Audrey Reid, and LGBTQ Fund board members, Jensen Luke Matar and Michael Martella, presented a learning session at the 2025 Annual Funding Forward conference in Houston, TX.

The presentation, entitled Growing Southern Youth Focused LGBTQ+ Communities, shared experiences on collecting data with youth, building trust with trans youth, and the importance of community for LGBTQ+ young people in the deep south.

Participants were invited to ask questions and generate discussion during the second half of the presentation. Dialogue around safety and belonging, recruitment, and funding emerged, as well as related personal accounts from Jensen in his programming efforts with The TRANS Program (see Grantee Spotlight on page 6).

Presenters and participants further engaged on this topic and expressed revelatory moments. We appreciated the opportunity to share our timely and important work with other Grantees, researchers, and community stakeholders.





# NYC House Party



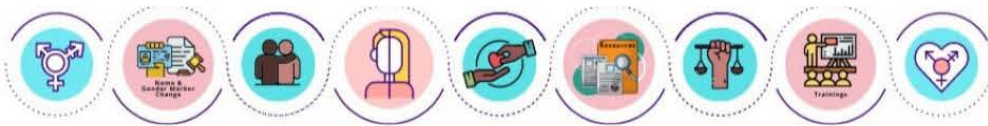
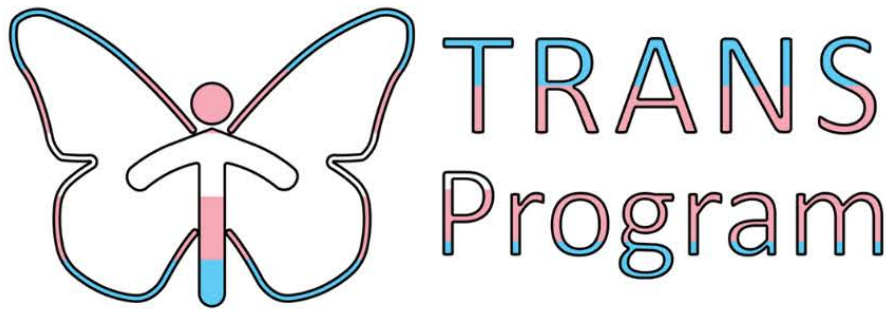
The LGBTQ Fund of Mississippi was the benefactor on April 14th of a "Sips at Sunset" House Party hosted by Megan Clapton and Donna Barksdale in New York City's Hudson Yards. Over fifty individuals gathered in the Skytop Penthouse overlooking the Hudson River and the entire West side of the city to learn about The Fund.

The guest list primarily included individuals with a connection to Mississippi as well as friends interested in the fact that The Fund is addressing LGBTQ needs in the deep South. Megan and Donna, as well as other co-hosts Rev. Buddy Stallings, Noble Black, and Sammy Moon welcomed the attendees and set the stage for a wonderful evening of relationship-building, reconnecting, storytelling, laughter, learning, and giving. Others working with The Fund and attending the event included Michael Martella, Brandi Westbrook, and Rob Hill.

Megan and Donna both expressed their enthusiasm for the work being supported by The Fund by saying "we were so pleased to have played a role in organizing this wonderful event, and we are so grateful for the support received as a result of coming together for a good cause that benefits Mississippians."







**The Transgender Resources, Advocacy, Networking and Services (TRANS) Program**

— Working to improve transgender and gender non-conforming / non-binary lives, in Mississippi —

**Jensen Luke Matar recently attended the Funding Forward 2025 conference and discussed the mission and program initiatives of TRANS Program that aim to serve trans and non-binary youth, highlighting partnered efforts with Dr. Melanie Walsh's support, in August of 2024.**

**He further discussed successful strategies for engaging youth and developing their trust, including the prioritization of meeting them where they are, centralizing peer to peer interactions, and showing up for them on a consistent basis and in the most rudimental ways.**

**Finally, he expanded on the need for support of parents and caregivers of youth and how providing such best ensures the foundational health, stability and safety of youth in their homes, schools and elsewhere.**

**For more information on TRANS Program or  
to show your support, please visit**

**<https://www.transprogram.org>**





**DONATE  
HERE**

