

Filling a Need

“Cross-dressers can be told it is o.k. For them to go to Patches! Finally we have something to tell them.”

-Minutes of Gay Cincinnati Switchboard, October 11, 1982.

For years, transgender Cincinnatians, cross-dressers, and transsexuals had been searching for their own place in the local Gay community. In 1984, a Transgender woman named Heather began reaching out and with the help of existing community resources and a transgender group in Detroit, formed Cross-Port in 1985.

Hardship Brings Unity

All over the country, the urgency of the AIDS crisis brought gay male and lesbian communities closer together. The pages of Dinah, the lesbian newsletter, reported “Wednesday, September 11, 1985, marked a milestone when the first 3 all lesbian groups officially joined the Greater Cincinnati Gay and Lesbian Coalition (GCGLC).” The GCGLC was still serving to bring the diverse groups in the LGBTQ community together to communicate with each other and mobilize when necessary.

Stonewall Fights Discrimination

Artifact Image: Cincinnati Pride Parade 1987, Gaybeat.



In 1987, a young man approached Stonewall’s discrimination task force claiming he had been fired from his restaurant job after his manager overheard him talking to his boyfriend. When task force chair John Maddux looked into the story, he found 17 Gay and Lesbian people had been fired from the three restaurants owned by the local chain: InCahoots. Stonewall met with the company’s owner, but when he denied the accusations and the organization’s demands, they took stronger action. Bringing together members of the political coalition they were building, including LGBTQ groups as well as local chapters of National Organization for Women and NAACP, Stonewall orchestrated a boycott. The combination of bad publicity and a significant drop in business convinced the company to concede. The day before Pride 1987, the owners of InCahoots made a public apology, offered back-pay and to rehire the employees, and changed their corporate policy to address discrimination against gay people. For the 5-year-old Stonewall, getting a corporation to settle the dispute without taking them to court was a major victory.