

For Immediate Release

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March 22 Equality Project Examines Equality in Sports and Athletics

FOND DU LAC—The Equality Project’s March 22 event will focus on Equality in Sports and Athletics, from 6-8 p.m. at Open Circle Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 19 3rd St., in downtown Fond du Lac. The Equality Project is a monthly gathering to educate, support, and take action to achieve equality for LGBTQ+ persons. The evening begins with a 6 p.m. snack and light potluck, and will continue from 6:30-8 p.m. with a program featuring local coaches and athletes speaking on stereotypes and stigma, as well as sharing personal stories. All Fond du Lac residents who stand on the side of love are invited to attend.

“Until quite recently, athletes have been expected to hide their sexual orientation. There has been a wide range of stigma about being gay and in sports,” said Christopher Szymczak, OCUUF Equality Project coordinator, who also has competed in cross country, track, basketball, and tennis. “But a growing number of professional athletes—and several Team USA Olympic athletes—are publicly coming out. Many are making statements because they want to live honestly and to make it easier for non-professional LGBTQ+ athletes to also be themselves as they compete. For example, football player and coach Shane Wickes gave a TED Talk, and fully came out to his family during that talk.”

To frame the topic and provide context and history, the evening will feature two coaches discussing LGBTQ+ participation in athletics from two different perspectives.

“We are so pleased to have UW-Fond du Lac Associate Professor Lee Watson join us as our lead speaker,” Szymczak said. “He includes content about equality related to LBGT+ people, women, and people of color in athletics in classes he teaches on campus, and we are fortunate to have him sharing this information with us through the Equality Project.”

Marian University Women’s Basketball Head Coach Lyndsey Seewald will also share her perspective as a gay woman athlete and coach. Seewald was a featured speaker at the 2017 TEDxFondduLac event, where she encouraged people to examine their fear and biases in a talk titled “Humaning.”

Like the Open Circle’s Humanity Project, with its goal of getting past race as a barrier, The Equality Project aims to remove gender and sexuality as barriers in understanding each other, and to improve relationships across the community. Upcoming Equality Projects are scheduled for April 26, May 24, and

June 21; topics will include the compatibility of religion and LGBTQ+, changes in policy under the current administration, and a summer celebration of LGBTQ+ pride events.

“We have embraced radical hospitality,” said Open Circle President Lisette Aldrich. “Open Circle is a welcoming and safe place for all folks, a sanctuary. This supports the core idea that first grabbed me in my religious education in my childhood: Love One Another.”

Unitarian Universalists strongly believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and the spiritual practice of welcome is a very important part of UU faith communities. For 25 years, congregations have worked hard to make sure lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people are full members of UU faith communities. Being welcoming means striving for radical inclusion, and creating spaces that honor every part of individuals’ identities, backgrounds, and experiences.

Open Circle Sunday services are at 10 a.m.

Follow Open Circle Unitarian Universalist Fellowship on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Open-Circle-Unitarian-Universalist-Fellowship-115997188421362/> and on the web at <http://www.ocuuf.org/> . Also follow The Equality Project on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/equalityprojectfdl/>.

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