PRIDE Center is proud of presidential recognition for LGBT efforts

President Barack Obama recently declared Sept. 15 as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Community Center Awareness Day, and officials with Sacramento State’s PRIDE Center (www.csus.edu/pride/) appreciate the recognition for their efforts to promote understanding, acceptance and inclusion.

In recognition of the proclamation, the center will stage a cake and punch reception at noon Monday, Sept. 15.

A letter from the president was sent to officials at centers across the nation, including J’Lissabeth Faughn, director of Sac State’s Multi-Cultural, PRIDE and Women’s Resource centers.

“For decades, LGBT community centers have been at the forefront of expanding opportunity and increasing support for LGBT Americans,” the letter states. “By providing a broad range of important resources – from cultural and educational programs to social and health services – these centers improve lives and remind us of the ability we have to realize the future we seek.”

“Twenty-five years ago, presidents weren’t even talking about LGBT,” Faughn says. “The fact that our chief executive recognizes the need for it is validation that the centers are needed.”

“We put a lot of work and time and heart into what we do,” says Chris Kent, PRIDE’s administrative support coordinator. “It’s nice to have it acknowledged by someone as important as the president of the United States.”

The idea for the awareness day came from CenterLink, the community of LGBT centers, to promote the vital services offered by the centers.

The PRIDE and Women’s Resource centers share an office and hang-out space in the University Union next to Round Table Pizza. Initially a program offered by the Women’s Resource Center, the PRIDE Center became an entity of its own in 2006.

The center offers a number of services for Sac State students.
As part of the Panel Program, students, faculty and staff receive training, then take part in panel discussions for various classes and student clubs.

“They tell their coming-out stories – how they discovered they were gay, lesbian, transgender, queer or an ally,” Faughn says. Students can then ask questions, which run the gamut from dating to religion to parents.

“Last year, over 1,500 students viewed a panel,” Kent says.

The center also conducts “safe zone” training, after which the student, staff member or faculty member receives a sticker to place on their door or backpack to let LGBT students know this is someone who won’t judge them.

The latest effort is to get alumni involved in the center, and Faughn is looking forward to creating opportunities for Sac State’s former students.

And the PRIDE Center is hoping to work with the Women’s Studies department, which is developing an LGBT studies minor.

“There are a lot of good things happening,” Faughn says.

For more information on the PRIDE Center, visit the website or call (916) 278-8720. For media assistance, call Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156. – Craig Koscho