

D.C. LGBTQ+ Youth Service Providers Receive Significant Investment for Bilingual Street Outreach Programs from Capital One

WASHINGTON, DC,- During Hispanic Heritage Month and LGBTQ+ History Month, three D.C.-based service providers—Supporting and Mentoring Youth Advocates and Leaders (SMYAL), Latin American Youth Center (LAYC), and Sasha Bruce Youthwork —are receiving grant funding from Capital One to significantly expand outreach programs to Spanish-speaking LGBTQ+ youth. The investment, which totals \$450,000, will provide each organization with \$150,000 to connect youth, aged 16-24, with culturally and linguistically competent support including:

- Legal services,
- Housing support,
- Employment and educational opportunities,
- Vital documents,
- Healthcare,
- Resource navigation, and
- Emergency resources such as food, hygiene, phone service, and clothing.

In September 2022, SMYAL identified the need for services for Spanish-speaking, undocumented, and English as a second language (ESL) youth. With generous pilot funding provided by Capital One, SMYAL initiated its Bilingual Street Outreach Program, driven by a mission to deliver culturally sensitive resources and support to LGBTQ+ youth who often face unique challenges due to language barriers. The program dismantles these barriers by proactively engaging with the community to build relationships and connect clients to vital resources in their preferred language.

In the first year of the program, SMYAL's Street Outreach Manager, Sierra Barnedo, exceeded program goals and supported over 100 youth in the DC area, but there remains a continued and growing need for additional outreach efforts. As SMYAL marks the first anniversary of its Bilingual Street Outreach Program, the increase in funding from Capital One tremendously expands capacity and programmatic impact. Strategic collaborations with organizations such as LAYC and Sasha Bruce enhance outreach efforts, preventing service duplication while ensuring seamless collaboration to reach even more youth. The new grant funding further strengthens these efforts through investments in additional dedicated bilingual staff at each organization, emergency resources, transportation for clients, document translation, and an increased number of outreach supplies.

“Through this program, we are connecting a whole range of queer people to services who can't find support anywhere else because of language barriers or immigration status. By going out into the community, we are meeting people in a space they are comfortable with, taking the time to build a real relationship, understand their experiences, and offer support in a place and language they know.” – Sierra Barnedo, SMYAL Street Outreach Manager

“Spanish-Speaking LGBTQ+ youth often face unique cultural and linguistic barriers that exacerbate individual challenges such as accessing safe housing or seeking legal advice. This funding allows LAYC to secure housing, address pressing needs, and create safe spaces for vulnerable young people to seek support that makes them feel understood, validated, and protected.” – Lupi Quinteros-Grady, LAYC President and CEO

“We believe that when youth thrive, our communities thrive. We are proud to partner with Capital One, LAYC, and SMYAL on this initiative that will help maximize Sasha Bruce's four Drop-In Centers and Street Outreach Program to reach even more LGBTQ+ and Spanish-speaking youth in the District of Columbia and Prince George's County, MD. We appreciate Capital One's generous investment, which helps nonprofits like ours implement innovative solutions to address some of our community's most pressing challenges -- Thank you, Capital One.” – Deborah Shore, Founder and Executive Director of Sasha Bruce Youthwork

“Capital One is proud to support these organizations that provide critical, inclusive services to youth in our community. This partnership helps create an equal opportunity for everyone to prosper and live independently.” – Dane Moist, Manager of Community Impact & Investment at Capital One.

As the program celebrates its first year, the increased funding and collaborative partnerships underscore its commitment to making a lasting impact on the lives of underserved youth.

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