



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2022

*QORRN is a community project dedicated to helping LGBTQ+ individuals in rural areas access the resources they need.*

### OVERVIEW

In 2022, QORRN rearticulated our work through a three-pronged approach: **Resource-Mapping, Community Engagement,** and **Education/Outreach.** The year was full of activity which built upon the work of the previous two: expanding our online maps of LGBTQ+Focused and LGBTQ+Friendly resources; helping to grow the number, size, and accessibility of Queer community events in our home-base of DeKalb, IL; and offering numerous trainings and educational opportunities for area non-profits, organizations, and students at Northern Illinois University (NIU).

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### RESOURCE-MAPPING

- We stayed true to our original mission by continuing to add resources to our online network maps across Illinois and North Carolina. Throughout the year, a growing number of organizations and service providers reached out requesting to be added to our maps, helping to grow our network.

#### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

##### Queers'N'Allies Community Blood Drive

- In April 2022, QORRN teamed up with **Safe Passage** (DeKalb County's only Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Crisis Center), **Federated Church** (a Unitarian Universalist congregation in Sycamore, IL), **Barb City Babes** (DeKalb's premiere drag troupe), and **Versiti Blood Centers of Illinois** to host a first-of-its-kind Queers'N'Allies Community Blood Drive.
- Our goals were twofold: help battle the worst blood shortage in a decade and raise awareness about federal restrictions on donations from so-called "men who have sex with men" or "MSM"s. We exceeded our target and collected 22 units of blood, meaning up to 66 lives will be impacted and potentially saved thanks to the hard work and generosity of dozens of people. We also collected 142 signatures to petition members of congress and the federal government, asking them to lift the Queerphobic restrictions on donations from "MSM"s.

### DeKalb Pride Celebration

- In June, QORRN continued to collaborate with local organizations and individuals to mount the second iteration of [DeKalb County Pride](#).
  - Between June 18 and 24, over 500 people attended DeKalb Pride events—roughly twice as many attendees as in 2021!
  - The 2022 offerings were expanded to include a march around downtown DeKalb; a community reception and resource fair on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street; a free screening of the film *Tangerine* with a post-film discussion (facilitated by QORRN founder Frankie DiCiaccio) and a showing of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* with a live shadow ensemble at the **Egyptian Theatre**; a 21+ drag show at **Hometown Bar and Grill**; children's pride reading at the **Sycamore Public Library**; and a family-friendly Queer Social hosted by **Family Service Agency of DeKalb County**.

## EDUCATION/OUTREACH

### Community Trainings

- In an attempt to expand awareness around the reality for Queer communities in DeKalb County, Frankie offered numerous trainings to area groups including **DeKalb County Non-Profit Partnership**, **Federated Church of Sycamore**, and NIU College of Business's **Women in Business Professions** student group.
- The trainings included insights gathered in QORRN's 2021 LGBTQ+ Community Survey, data on national trends, Queer terminology and concepts, and ways that individuals and organizations can help serve and amplify DeKalb's Queer communities.

### NIU LGBT Studies Class Community Engagement Project

- Frankie spent the Fall semester working with Professor Amanda Littauer's LGBT Studies class at NIU. In small groups, students researched needs in DeKalb's Queer communities and developed plans for Community Engagement Projects.
- Frankie helped mentor students on their proposals—including budgets, equity and accessibility plans, activities, and marketing and outreach materials.
- In December, students pitched their events to members of the DeKalb Pride planning committee, including representatives of the **DeKalb Public Library**, the **Egyptian Theatre**, and NIU's **Gender and Sexuality Resource Center**. The winner is a family-friendly tie dye event, aimed at fostering "happiness, love, and community." It will be hosted in winter 2023 at the DeKalb Public Library, with



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funding generously provided by NIU's Center for the Study of Women and Gender Studies.

### WNIJ Perspectives

- Throughout 2022, Frankie had three 90-second "Perspective" essays published on WNIJ, Northern Illinois's **National Public Radio** member station. The topics included:
  - **January:** The national blood shortage and federal restrictions on donations from so-called "men who have sex with men".
  - **June:** The need for solidarity between marginalized groups in light of the US Supreme Court's Dobbs decision and Justice Thomas's concurring opinion suggesting that other precedents like Obergefell (which granted same-sex couples the right to marriage) could also be overturned.
  - **December:** The complex experience of President Biden signing the Respect for Marriage Act amidst a flurry of violence against LGBTQ+ communities and the Supreme Court's likely decision privileging so-called religious liberty over the rights of Queer Americans.

### LOOKING AHEAD

With the establishment of our three-pronged approach, I can envision QORRN's future with clarity and purpose. We will continue to offer resource-mapping so that rural Queers experiencing need can find supportive providers with ease; continue to engage our local community to provide meaningful and uplifting experiences for DeKalb's LGBTQ+ communities; and maintain education and outreach opportunities to help cultivate a vibrant landscape of allies in Northern Illinois. We look forward to kicking off 2023 with the Community Engagement tie-dye project, which will lead us into our third iteration of DeKalb Pride—our most intentional and aspirational program yet. The world continues to be wrought with uncertainty, but QORRN and our collaborators will continue to work for the safety, dignity, and joy of Queer individuals and communities.

Happy New Year,  
Frankie DiCiaccio  
Founder, Queer-Oriented Rural Resource Network (QORRN)



Scenes from the **Queers'N'Allies Community Blood Drive**. The Barb City Babes (Aviana Cock, Dymond C. Calloway, Moana Lotte) cheer on a donor and a Versiti phlebotomist. The Barb City Babes, QORRN's Frankie DiCiaccio, and Safe Passage's Bea Mendevil film a message for social media. The Barb City Babes pose with Federated Church's pastor Eric Ogi.

*Federated Church, April 23, 2022.*



## QUEERS'N'ALLIES COMMUNITY BLOOD DRIVE

We're facing the worst blood shortage in a decade.

There are still restrictions on donations from Queer people.

**SATURDAY,  
APRIL 23  
9am-1pm**

Federated Church of Sycamore  
612 W State St  
Sycamore, IL 60178

Come show your solidarity and help **SAVE A LIFE!**





QORRN founder Frankie DiCiaccio gives a presentation to area organizations and community-members through the DeKalb County Non-Profit Partnership.

*DeKalb County Community Foundation, June 22, 2022.*

Scenes from DeKalb County Pride.

*Downtown DeKalb/Egyptian Theatre,  
June 23, 2022.*

