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## Neil Patrick Harris, David Burtka, Chaz Bono, Jane Lynch & David Arquette Headlined L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala

1,200+ Guests Helped Raise More than \$680,000 for Center Services

LOS ANGELES, Nov. 17, 2011—The stars turned out to celebrate the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's four decades of service on Saturday, Nov. 12, joining more than 1, 200 other guests for the Center's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala & Auction at the Westin Bonaventure while helping to raise more than \$680,000 for Center services.

Hosted by the hilarious **Leslie Jordan**, who drew big laughs while wearing a knockoff of Madonna's trademark double cone bustier to represent the '90s, the event honored **Neil Patrick Harris** and his partner **David Burtka** as well as trailblazing transgender activist **Chaz Bono**. Longtime Center board of directors member and former board co-chair LuAnn Boylan was a surprise honoree, recognized for her 19 years of tireless service to the Center.

In addition to the stars on stage, several were spotted in the crowd and on the red carpet, including: **Meredith Baxter, Sara Gilbert, Geri Jewell, Sean Maher, Chandler Massey** and **Karina Smirnoff**.

Longtime Center board member **Jane Lynch** presented the Rand Schrader Distinguished Achievement Award to Harris and Burtka, one of the world's best known same-sex couples with children. The pair are steadfast supporters of many LGBT organizations and generous donors to the Center's LifeWorks program for LGBT youth. They're also role models to many for living openly, with honesty and integrity.

In his acceptance speech, Harris said that even though he and Burtka are activists, they sometimes just want to focus on being parents.

"And I think that's the greatest change that the Center has helped bring about in its 40 years," he said. "They and all of you are helping create a world where, for the first time for gays and

lesbians, being married and being a parent doesn't have to be about making a statement, and it can be just about living our lives."

**David Arquette** shared the struggles that his transgender sister, Alexis, faced in order to feel "comfortable in her own skin," before presenting the Board of Directors Award to his fellow *Dancing with the Stars* contestant, trailblazing activist Bono.

Bono has set a courageous example for trans people around the world by bravely sharing the story of his transition and his family's journey. He has been a dedicated activist in the LGBT community since 1995 and has served as a spokesperson for the Human Rights Campaign and as Entertainment Media Director for the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD).

The week before the event, Bono visited the Center for a tour and was impressed by how much the organization's services for the transgender community have expanded in recent years. The Center's transgender-specific services include: a Transgender Health Program that offers primary medical care; the Transgender Economic Empowerment Project, which helps trans people find work with transgender-friendly employers; help for those who want to legally change their name and gender marker; and more.

"I've done stuff with the Center over the years, but I wasn't aware of all the services that are readily available for the trans community. And finding out all about that made this award even sweeter for me," Bono said. "In my hometown, in an organization that started when I was 2, there's an opportunity for transgender Angelenos to really get the support and the services that they need. And when you don't get the support you need as a transgender person, really terrible things happen."

The evening included many poignant moments, including board member **Peter Paige's** heartfelt remembrances of turning to the Center as a youth in need of support; **Coco Peru's** (aka Clinton Leupp's) powerful rendition of "Those Were the Days"; and **Jennifer Leigh Warren's** heartfelt performance of "I Am What I Am."

In her speech, Center CEO Lorri L. Jean reflected on the Center's legacy.

"For 40 years, we have maintained our ideals," she said. "For 40 years, we have fought injustice. For 40 years we have provided a place for LGBT people and our allies of all kinds to find community. I wish, after 40 years, we could say our work is done. But we know that isn't true. We still don't have equality under the law. All too often the rights we do have, and sometimes our very humanity, are under attack."

"As long as we are treated as second-class citizens, as long as HIV and AIDS continue to be on the rise in our community, as long as LGBT seniors needing outside care feel forced back into

the closet, as long as misguided parents kick their LGBT kids out, as long as any LGBT person feels ashamed simply because of their gender identity or who they love, the Center will be here. We must be here. We will never give up and we will never give in until full and complete equality is ours.”

The Presenting sponsor was Wells Fargo. The Platinum sponsor was EMD Serono. Gold sponsors were the Anita May Rosenstein Foundation, CBS, LabCorp., NBCUniversal, Nordstrom, SoCal Gas and South Coast Plaza. Silver sponsors are ABC Disney, Allstate, AT&T, Cadillac, City National Bank, CVS Caremark, Fox, DIRECTV, the Lavender Caucus, Mark-Alan Harmon, Northrop Grumman, Paradigm, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, Ralphs, Target, US Bank, Verizon and OUT at Warner Bros. In-kind sponsors are Absolut, American Airlines, *Frontiers* magazine, *Lesbian News*, *Rage*, *Odyssey* and smartwater.

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**About the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center**

Since 1971 the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center has been building the health, advocating for the rights and enriching the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Our wide array of services and programs includes: free HIV/AIDS care and medications for those most in need; housing, food, clothing and support for homeless LGBT youth; low-cost counseling and addiction-recovery services; essential services for LGBT-parented families and seniors; legal services; health education and HIV prevention programs; transgender services; cultural arts and much more. Visit us on the Web at: [www.lagaycenter.org](http://www.lagaycenter.org).