Inclusive Safety & Security for LGBTQ+ Programming

meet the panelists

Tony Pankuch (they/them)
Education and Outreach Coordinator, Cummings Center for the History of Psychology in Akron, OH

Co-Chair, Task Force for Transgender Inclusion, American Alliance of Museums

MLIS from Kent State University, 2021

Cat parent, John Waters fan, hiking enthusiast

Drs. Nicholas and Dorothy Cummings
CENTER
FOR THE HISTORY
OF PSYCHOLOGY
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON

meet the panelists

Samantha Eisenberg (she/her)
Director of Development, JQ International

Co-Chair, Task Force for Transgender Inclusion, American Alliance of Museums

MA from UC Irvine, 2018 (Social Sciences)

Fund development, community building, and advocacy coaching for LGBTQ+ organizations and causes

meet the panelists

Jonathan Hamilt (he/they)
Co-founder and Comms Director

Co-founder of Drag Story Hour NYC, 2016
8 years of Storytelling as "Ona Louise"

Recipient of GLAAD Special Recognition Media
Award

First Drag Queen to ever read at the MET

meet the panelists

Regan Lopez-deVictoria (she/her)
Programs & Grants

Past lives:
Librarian in Butte, Montana
MLIS, University of Washington ('09)
Theatre professional, INTIMAN Theatre (Seattle)

Raising three kids between Ohio and Montana

why this session?

April 2023: GLAAD identified **161 incidents** of anti-LGBTQ protests and threats targeting drag events since early 2022

January 2024: GLAAD and the ADL recorded **700+ incidents of violence and threats** targeting LGBTQ people in 2023

Anti-LGBTQ+ threats and protests target bookstores, libraries, community centers, and — yes — **museums**

Bella Noche, Metropolitan Museum of Art

real world examples

LOCAL
Memphis museum cancels drag show as protesters show up

by: David Royer
Posted: Sep 24, 2022 / 09:16 AM CDT
Updated: Sep 24, 2022 / 03:48 PM CDT

Buckeye Imagination Museum cancels Queer Prom event

By Crawford County Now Staff | February 2, 2024 5:54 pm

Drag Queens at Please Touch Museum Have Some Parents Outraged

"We loved the Please Touch Museum," says one suburban mom. "But we'll never go there again."

by VICTOR FIORILLO · 6/8/2018, 9:12 a.m.

DEATH THREATS
Lincoln Children's Museum cancels drag queen story hour event following threats

Andrew Wegley , Nick McConnell Jul 27, 2021 Updated May 24, 2023

Rev. Yolanda
Children's Museum of Manhattan

Cholula Lemon
Brooklyn Children's Museum

session format

- Panel Discussion *(30 min)*
  - Preventative Measures
  - Addressing Backlash
  - Creating Safer Events

- Workshop
  - Divide into teams *(45 min)*

- Q&A *(15 min)*

Per Sia, de Young Museum, San Francisco

Preventative Measures
Internal Landscape

- **Assess your institution's values**
  Check in with staff, board, and community partners. Address discomfort ahead of time.
- **Understand your vulnerabilities**
  Who are your donors? What is your relationship with local policymakers and funding orgs?
- **Review your policies**
  Does your institution have existing policies related to safety, security, and emergency situations? At a minimum, have behavioral policies & bomb threat management plan in place.
  Know what is there and what isn't. Know who is trained and who isn't.

Preventative Measures
External Landscape

- **Assess local climate**
  What attitudes exist toward LGBTQ+ inclusion in your community?
  Have there been other incidents?
  Is there heavy support for anti-LGBTQ+ legislation?
- **Identify your existing allies**
  Who can you count on for support? Bring them in early.
- **Build relationships**
  Local press, law enforcement, and LGBTQ+ orgs can provide support and alert to you incoming threats. Does your police department have an LGBTQ+ liaison?

Preventative Measures
Digital Landscape

- **Review your digital footprint**
  Are staff names and contact info posted online? Check your privacy settings. Turn on Google Alerts.
- **Implement event registration policies**
  Is registration required? Can people register online? Do you have any way of vetting registrants?
- **Manage your social media**
  Who has access to your social media accounts? Are they trained to address hate speech, harassment, or negative comments?

Preventative Measures
Digital Landscape continued

- **Protect your passwords**
  Use a password manager and ensure that all passwords are unique. Enable two-factor authentication where possible.
- **Install a VPN**
  Services like Hotspot Shield and NordVPN mask your IP address and hide your browsing activity and geo-location
- **Empower your team**
  Ensure that staff and volunteers know how to protect their own data and personal information. Provide data security training, access to identity monitoring tools.

Addressing Backlash
Online

- **Assess the threat level**
  Identify the severity of negative comments, posts, and messages. Is this critical, hateful, or actively threatening?
- **Document all backlash**
  Regardless of the severity of the message, keep a detailed record of any negative feedback that you receive.
- **Do not escalate**
  Do not engage with hate speech - don't debate or argue. *Consistently* follow your institution's policies regarding deleting or hiding comments.

Addressing Backlash
When You Are Threatened

- **Do not ignore threats**
  Immediately forward any threatening messages to a designated institutional leader and alert law enforcement.
- **Notify staff and volunteers of any threats**
  Do not conceal this information. Empower staff and volunteers to protect themselves.
- **Collaborate with your team**
  No matter what actions you take, listen to your staff and volunteers. Include them in the decision-making process.

Creating Safer Events
Planning and Presenting

- **Know your layout**
  Map your floor plan, parking lot, entrances, and exits. Review this map with all on-site staff and volunteers.
- **Assign roles**
  Who is hosting the event? Who is monitoring entrances and exits? Who is creating space between visitors and protestors?
- **Track attendance**
  Require registration for your event, and do not admit individuals who have not registered.

Creating Safer Events
Planning and Presenting continued

- **Secure your event**
  Work with your security team, police, and/or a private security team.
  Ensure that all security personnel are coordinated and in contact.
- **Monitor security cameras**
  If your institution has security cameras installed, assign staff or
  volunteers to monitor video in real time.
- **Implement child safeguarding policies**
  If underage visitors are present, they should be accompanied by an
  parent, guardian, or trained adult at all times.

Creating Safer Events
Planning and Presenting continued

- **De-escalate, de-escalate, de-escalate**
  Do not attempt to argue, educate, or debate - create space between visitors and opposition.
- **Create a welcoming environment**
  Opposition may use megaphones or attempt to engage with visitors. Create visual and audio barriers to avoid disruption.

Creating Safer Events
If You Have to Cancel

- **Notify registrants immediately**
  Have an email or phone message prepared in advance. Notify registrants as early as possible.
- **Be firm in your values**
  Cancellation may be seen as surrendering or "giving in" to opposition. Affirm your support for the LGBTQ+ community in all public communications.
- **Ask yourself: What can we do?**
  As a team, assess your options. How else can you offer support for the LGBTQ+ community? Remain empowered.

Creating Safer Events
After an Event

- **Team Debrief**
Include all on-site staff and volunteers. Discuss what worked, what didn't, where people felt uncomfortable or unsafe.
- **Support your team's mental health**
Threats and protests may be traumatic, particularly for marginalized people. Ensure that your team has access to counseling and other mental health resources.
- **Learn. Adapt. Continue.**
Ongoing LGBTQ+ inclusion is critical to the museum field. Learn from this experience, and keep up the good work.

What is it?

Drag Story Hour's response to a rapid increase in anti-drag opposition activity around DSH events nationwide.

Program Goals
- Reduce potential for harm, both physical violence & program interruption
- Increase community confidence in safely producing and attending DSH events

Shields Up! creates a **safety ecosystem** - a **Bubble**, a **Path**, and a **Shield** - that is attended by a safety team consisting of a **Storyteller**, an **Organizer**, a **Captain**, and a volunteer body of **Guardians**, collectively known as the Royal Guard.

Additional roles include **Venue Contacts**, **Allies**, and **Audiences**.

Guiding Principles

- **De-escalatory**: Drag Story Hour does not engage opposition.
- **An Ecosystem**: Roles move collaboratively within the SUP! Environment
- **Deliberate**: Planning, delegation, and activating!
- **Scale-able**: Use entire, a part, or one piece of the model.
- **Preserves the systems already in place**: if it ain't broke, don't fix it!
- **Protect the most marginalized = protect the most**.

General Concepts
Shields Up! Is NOT:

- Prescriptive "one size fits all" approach
- Static, inflexible, rigid, or mandatory
- New concepts or actions
  - it's the structure that is unique!

**Pickle, The New Children's Museum
San Diego**

Environments

Reduce the potential for harmful interactions by minimizing or eliminating contact between opposition, Storytellers, & Audiences.

- Creates a **Bubble** of safety!
- Maintains a **Path** to and from the Bubble
- Creates a **Shield** to produce distance between Audiences & opposition

Private properties often have clear boundaries that are enforceable on grounds of trespassing.

Public venues must maintain free access and rely on behavioral policies to hold boundaries effectively inside the Bubble - **venues must ensure these policies are in place!**
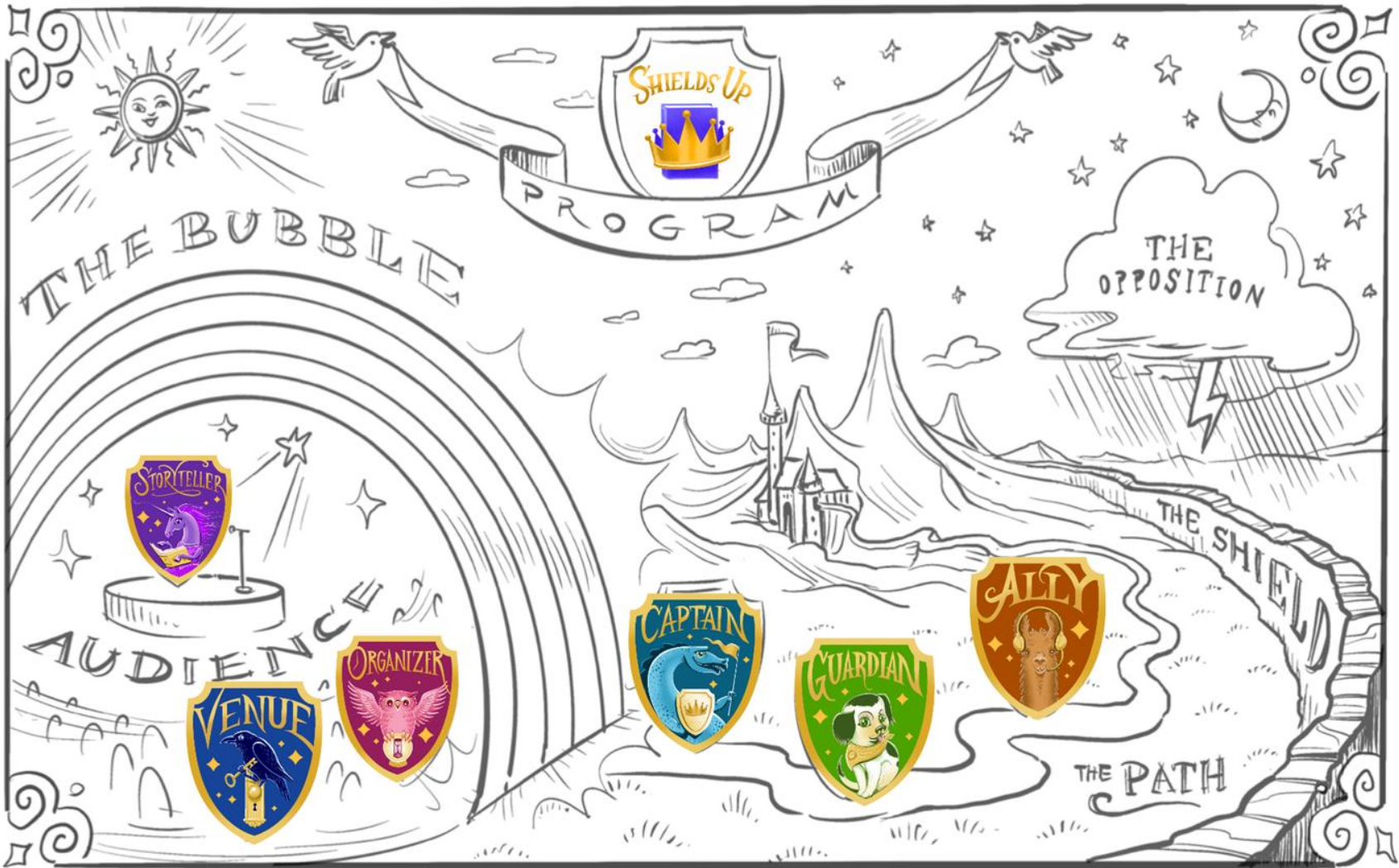
Create a Safety Team

Shields Up! assigns roles to individual members of a safety team:

These roles interact with other folks from the venue and the community:

*Not all venues or scenarios require each role to be filled - **adapt as needed!***

Workshop Introduction

Pineapple Soda (she/her)
Reno, Nevada

Seasoned Storyteller for Drag Story Hour

Occupational Therapist by day

Takes care of her cats by night

Loves Pina Coladas

AND YOUR EVENT HOST!

Workshop Instructions

Goal: To create a safe and fun event for Pineapple Soda, your staff, and all the patrons in attendance

- Attendees divide into groups according to which model fits their needs
- Each group votes on 1 rep to present at the end
- Each group receives an envelope of 1 out of 3 different model scenarios
- Each group has **30 minutes** to work on their scenario
- Each group rep joins the panel and shares their plan **15 minutes**

Tour and choose your institution

NOTE: each group will be given 1 of these 3 models

small gallery

medium museum

established institution

Municipal Muses

A private museum funded by small group of donors

5-15 employees

- First Drag Story Hour but hosted Pride events in the past
- Fundraised budget for this event **$375**
- Unsure staff but excited leadership
- Mixed messages from community
- Drag Storyteller is familiar with the space and volunteers there
- Known Local Police officer available

The Futures Past

*Funded by mix of grants, public donations, and some local government support

20-200 employees
Small full-time security team
Option to hire outside security for event

- Small grant to put this event together **$750**
- Excited Staff, but weary leadership
- Mixed messages from community
- Relaunching Drag Story Hour after pilot event was shutdown in 2022

CASBAH ARTS CENTER

*Funded by private funders, grants, endowments

Several hundred-1,000 employees
Full-time contracted security
- A couple of past DSH under their belt but with former staff
- Fully-funded program with option for quarter installments **$2000**
- Aware and prepared staff
- Excited Community

Three Reporting Areas

- **Inside Safety**

- **Outside Safety**

- **Public + Donor Relations**

Group Agreements

- Create a Brave Space
- Read books not colleagues
- Don't yuck someone's yum
- Oops and ouch
- "I'd love to have a conversation about that"
- Nudge is love
- One diva, one mic
- Body awareness
- Assume best intention
- Accept multiplicity
- Turn "reaction" to "wonder"

THANK YOU

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