Southern Philanthropy Stands with Orlando

Sunday’s deadly mass shooting at Pulse, a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) nightclub in Orlando, which took the lives of 49 people and injured dozens more, has shaken and saddened our region and our nation.

The Southeastern Council of Foundations stands united in grief with those who have endured this horrific attack on their community. We extend our deepest condolences and prayers to the victims and families, as well as the LGBTQ and Latino communities that have been rocked by this brutal act of violence.

Promoting and practicing inclusiveness is one of SECF’s core values. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness: Only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: Only love can do that.” We remain hopeful for – and work toward – a world in which no one is targeted for acts of hate and violence due to their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.

This is a difficult time for Orlando, the state of Florida, the Southeast and our entire country. Our past experiences have shown that Southern philanthropic leaders have supported the recovery and healing efforts of people and communities in times of need and suffering.

Several SECF members are longstanding leaders in supporting the LGBTQ community and promoting inclusiveness. If you are a funder working in this space, we want to hear from you. At a time when many foundations are asking how they can respond to this massacre, stories from those with experience working through such crises can serve as a rich resource for learning and understanding. If you would like to share your insights, please contact Jaci Bertrand, director of member engagement, at jaci@secf.org.

If your foundation is looking for a way to be of assistance in the immediate aftermath of this tragedy, several options are available, including the OneOrlando Fund established by the Central Florida Foundation. Funders for LGBTQ Issues has also compiled a resource guide, including LGBTQ and Latino organizations that are assisting those communities.

In addition, you can join a national teleconference for funders on Wednesday, June 22, hosted by the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers, Funders for LGBTQ Issues, Change Philanthropy, AAPIP, ABFE and Hispanics in Philanthropy. The teleconference will include the latest updates from Florida’s philanthropic community to learn about current needs, how local philanthropy is responding and the type of help that is needed now and in future. Participants will also share some lessons learned from other mass shootings and explore how philanthropy can play a role right now and down the road.

SECF stands ready to support our members who are seeking ways to connect or get more involved as a volunteer. Please contact our staff for help obtaining information or connecting with other organizations.

Southern Philanthropy is stronger together – and together, we are drawing inspiration from the heroic, selfless acts of humanity from folks in Orlando, the Southeastern region and across the country.