

THE BUCKEYE FLAME



OHIO'S LGBTQ+ NEWSROOM

2026 IMPACT REPORT



ANOTHER YEAR OF BLAZING IMPACT

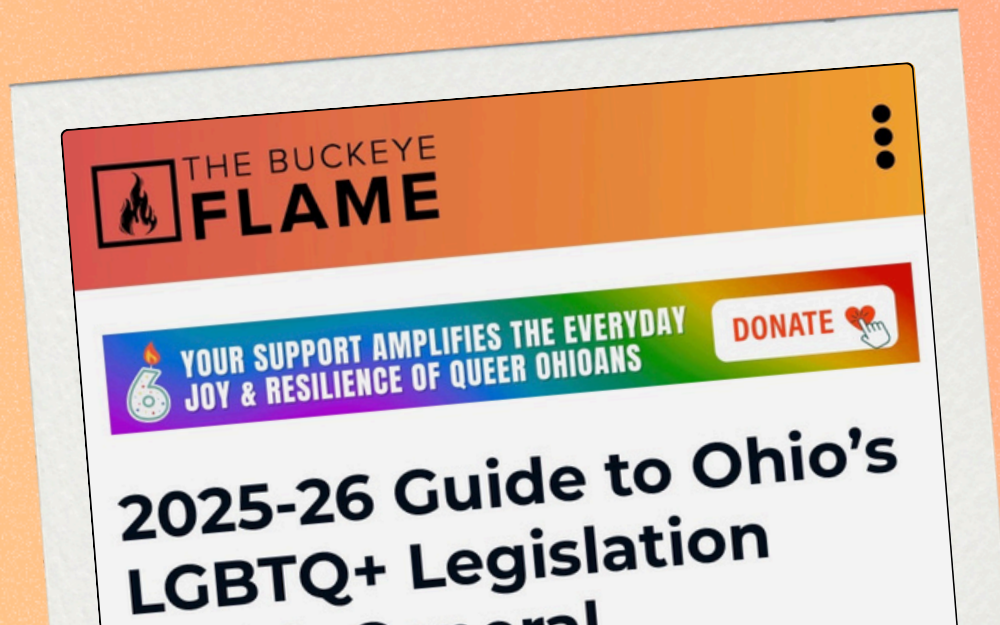
Here's the thing: I tell anyone who will listen that The Buckeye Flame is the most important thing I have done in my life to date. That is due to the people I get to work with, the LGBTQ+ Ohio stories we get to tell and the unparalleled impact these stories have on Ohio...and the world.

In the past year alone, these stories have caused homophobic school board members to resign, helped LGBTQ+ nonprofits avoid eviction and more generally provided empowerment, validation and support to countless LGBTQ+ Ohioans. With the addition of our two Reporting Fellows in 2026, this has also meant vastly increasing the number of LGBTQ+ voices of color we have centered in our stories.

The work is far from done and there are so many more LGBTQ+ Ohio stories to tell. And we are so appreciative for your support in telling them. Here's to another year of keeping the Flame burning bright. 🔥



Ken Schneck
Editor



MISSION

The Buckeye Flame amplifies the voices of LGBTQ+ Ohioans to support community and civic empowerment through the creation of engaging content that chronicles our triumphs, struggles and lived experiences.

VISION

To be **the** source for LGBTQ+ Ohio news.



2.4 MILLION +
Visits since 2020

2.1 MILLION +
Users since 2020

13,000 + **52%**
Newsletter subscriptions Newsletter open rate

1,650+
TOTAL STORIES

June 2024 - May 2025

265 stories

June 2025 - May 2026

 **320 stories**

31% Story growth

**BUT THESE NUMBERS DON'T
TELL THE FULL STORY...**

Our stories are *free* for any news outlet to republish, so our **full** reach is astronomically higher than the numbers on this page.

Our stories have been republished by:

 **USA TODAY**

The New York Times

ADVOCATE

THE 19th*

OHIO CAPITAL JOURNAL

CityBeat

 **The Marshall Project**

LA MEGANOTA

 **19,100 +**  **13,300 +**  **7,200 +**

IGNITING ACTION

Sometimes a news story is just a story — but at The Buckeye Flame, we write every piece with the intention of igniting action and inspiring you, our readers, to use our stories to start a conversation, support a local LGBTQ+ business, contact a legislator or spark a change in your community. These are just some of our LGBTQ+ Ohio stories that sparked change across this year.

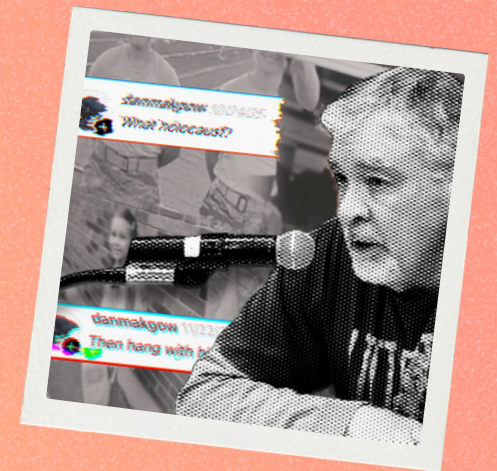


THE STATE OF OHIO'S LGBTQ+ NONPROFITS

2025 was a rough year for LGBTQ+ nonprofits, and we heard anecdotally from our colleagues that they were struggling — financially, but also existentially. To get the full story, we reached out to nearly 100 Ohio organizations with a survey, and heard back from 38. **What we found across the board was that demand for their services had grown, but so had operating costs, while donations and grants were on the decline. While the results painted an uncertain picture, the story itself gave these nonprofits a new fundraising tool.** With the concrete data from the Buckeye Flame article to back up their concerns, Ohio LGBTQ+ nonprofits had a compelling case that they leveraged to raise funds and shore up their budgets to continue caring for our community.

LITTLE MIAMI SCHOOL BOARD

On a Monday in March, our Rural LGBTQ+ beat reporter Ben Jodway completed his investigation into Dan Smith, a school board member in Little Miami, OH. We had initially been reporting on Smith when he voted to remove a welcoming “Hate Has No Home Here” poster from a teacher’s classroom and made anti-LGBTQ+ public statements. We soon found there was more to Dan Smith’s story. Ben found a series of extreme anti-semitic messages Smith had made on social media. **By Tuesday, Smith resigned from the school board, citing our request for comment.**



TRANS OHIOANS + FIREARMS

In a team effort, our two staff writers went in-depth on a story that simply would not have been told anywhere else — about transgender Ohioans who have created a safe space to teach other trans people how to shoot guns and handle firearms safely.

The story of this unexpected group struck a nerve and sparked conversation not just in Ohio, but across the country. **The story was republished in The 19th News and The Advocate, two national outlets with tens of thousands more followers than The Buckeye Flame — reaching far beyond Ohio to share this thoughtfully and ethically-reported story.**



WHAT OUR READERS HAVE TO SAY...

“The Buckeye Flame gives us the information needed to both protect and celebrate queer Ohio.”

“The Buckeye Flame is THE modern vehicle for LGBT news, culture and topical stories (including investigations) throughout Ohio.”

“Your representation and amplifying queer voices is literally saving lives!”

“The Flame covers the kind of news I'm not going to see anywhere else.”

“I really appreciate the Buckeye Flame - it helps me continue my education so I can be a better parent to my queer kiddo!”



ONE YEAR OF 'THIS NEWS IS SO GAY'

Our podcast, **This News is So Gay**, launched in July 2025, thanks to generous support from **The Cleveland Foundation**. It stands as the only **LGBTQ+** reporters roundtable in the audio landscape.

Think Meet the Press ... but gayer.

Every week, we gather a group of LGBTQ+ journalists from across the country, spotlight the work of queer journalists and uplift the authentic presentation of queer stories by and for LGBTQ+ people.

"A perfect mix of serious news and hilarious queer nonsense. I love this podcast."

"I have a queer child and want to be as supportive as I can. I can't say I understand everything about what they're dealing with but your podcast has been really beneficial for me about current LGBTQ topics and governmental impacts."

"This podcast is steadily becoming a must listen on my weekly list! Having key issues important to the LGBTQ+ community broken down in a clear and digestible manner is so helpful!"

PODCAST SNAPSHOT



Nominee for Best Emerging Podcast at The Ambies (the Oscars of podcasting)



100% 5-Star Reviews



75,000 Listens



60 LGBTQ+ Journalist Guests



40 Publications Represented



MEMBERSHIPS & AFFILIATIONS

**REPORT
FOR AMERICA**

**News is
OUT**
National Queer Media Collaborative

Lion
PUBLISHERS
local.
independent.
online.
news.

nlgja

**LocalMedia
Association**

**Institute for
Nonprofit News**

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDING PARTNERS

- The Akron Community Foundation
- Arts Midwest
- The Andrews Foundation
- The Cleveland Foundation
- CNP Media Fund
- Fund for Nonprofit News (NewsMatch) at The Miami Foundation
- The George Gund Foundation
- Google News Initiative
- The Greer Foundation
- LION
- Listening Post Collective, with MacArthur Foundation support
- Local Media Association
- Mt. Sinai Health Foundation
- The Reva and David Logan Foundation
- **Readers like you**

GROWING NEWSROOM

In our first five years, The Buckeye Flame grew from an all-volunteer newsroom to a staff of three, including an editor and two full-time staff members.

Thanks to the support of the Mt. Sinai Healthcare Foundation and the LGBTQ+ Opportunity Fund of The Cleveland Foundation, we were thrilled to welcome to our team two reporting fellows covering LGBTQ+ Ohioans of color. Elizabeth Randolph-Montgomery and Siaara Freeman joined our newsroom for a six-month fellowship in spring of 2025.

And their reporting is already making an impact! Elizabeth's story on The Collective — a Toledo nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering unity and empowerment within the Black LGBTQ+ community — meant dozens of new followers and community members reaching out to join or volunteer with the organization.



Siaara Freeman



Elizabeth Randolph-Montgomery

OUR STAFF



Ken Schneck (he/him)
Editor



H.L. Comeriato (they/them)
Senior Staff Writer



Ben Jodway (he/him)
Rural LGBTQ+ Beat Reporter



Laura Putre (she/her)
Copy Editor

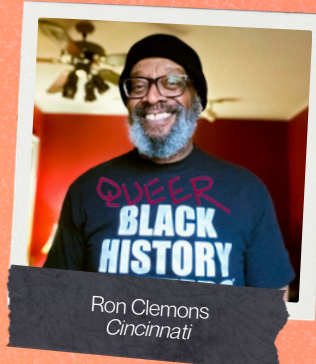
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