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The Chamber of Commerce for the LGBT Community and Allies serving Northeast Ohio

plexus

2010 Progress Report

letter from the president

2009 was a year to remember both for Plexus and the greater Northeast Ohio business community. What stood out this year was simple, a true feeling of unity. Despite the tough economic climate, we stood united as professionals, committed to providing proactive business development for the LGBT community and our Allies. Our message of LGBT inclusion in our regional business environment gained strength as Plexus was able to exert a greater presence in economic and civic conversations. And as a result, community organizations, small businesses and corporations alike sought us out for ways to collaborate on this vision.

This report covers a year of incredible growth for Plexus, but what makes this truly impressive is the multitude of meaningful relationships that were formed in the process. This growth would not have occurred without those who share our passion for inclusion and a belief in our mission. Through our corporate, small business and individual relationships, Plexus saw a 50 percent growth in sponsorship, while our programming tripled. In 2009 we impacted more individuals and businesses than during all our previous years.

But these numbers are only half the equation; none of this would have occurred nor would our goals have been met without our committed partners, board members and interns who deliver the Plexus promises set for 2009. Again, it is about relationships.

As we look forward to 2010, it is humbling to reflect on what has been accomplished in so brief a time, and we feel immense gratitude for the many relationships we have built. We will continue to strive to strengthen these relationships, work collaboratively on issues facing our region's economic climate, and act together to achieve our vision of a fully inclusive business climate for everyone.

Eric Lutzo
President & Co-Founder

plexus member profile

FIT Resources was founded in Cleveland in 1999 by Micki Tubbs and Michelle Tomallo. This female-owned company became nationally certified by Plexus as LGBT-owned in 2009. They operate FIT Technologies which focuses on comprehensive IT managed solutions for businesses and SchoolOne, providing software and IT services to K-12 schools.

In 2008, Tubbs and Tomallo received the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award in Technology for Northeast Ohio. In 2009, FIT was named Best Tech Services Company by the Northeast Ohio Software Association, was rated #10 on the Weatherhead 100 at Case Western Reserve University, and received a Pillar Award for Community Service from Cleveland's Smart Business Network.



*FIT Resources founders
Tomallo and Tubbs*

network nights

Plexus facilitates regular networking nights that are open to everyone. These free events provide members and guests the opportunity to meet others who are interested in being active in the LGBT & Allied business community. Attendees can expand their professional network and gain important information and insight from decision-makers and trendsetters in Northeast Ohio.

2009 network nights highlights

View Nightclub & Ultralounge, Cleveland - Cleveland Councilman Brian Cummins discussed upcoming legislation that affects the LGBT Community

Blue Canyon Ranch, Twinsburg - Co-owner & chef Brandt Evans discussed the challenges of owning, operating & expanding a restaurant

Wonderbar, Cleveland - American Greetings Diversity Director Pat Ferry discussed emerging trends in employment diversity

Bricco Restaurant, Akron - Summit County Executive Russ Pry discussed the economic impact of LGBT community on the region

Sergio's Sarava Restaurant, Shaker Square - Spangle Magazine founder Brian Thornton discussed starting a new LGBT business in Northeast Ohio

leadership series

The Plexus Leadership Series brings nationally recognized experts from the corporate and nonprofit sectors to Northeast Ohio, to share best practices, resources and tools for creating and fostering inclusive workplaces. Speakers interact with Plexus members and sponsors at a series of events to discuss

to explain how diversity and workplace inclusivity practices can improve a business' bottom line, while making this region a more attractive destination for businesses and professionals to put down roots and improve its economic environment.

2009 leadership series highlights

Building Inclusive Workplaces

Jay Allen, Executive Vice President at Schwab Investor Services

In June, Jay Allen shared his professional journey as an openly gay executive in the corporate world, and how Schwab's HR focus on inclusivity benefits the company. Mr. Allen leads Schwab's HR, Talent Development, Compensation & Benefits, Employee Communications, and Events & Production Services.

Supplier Diversity Summit

Brent Friedman, Sourcing Manager at Merck & Co., Inc.

In September, Plexus hosted the region's first ever summit about supplier diversity. The event brought together a panel of experts representing organizations with the authority to provide businesses with Supplier Diversity certifications and who discussed the needs and challenges for corporations using a Supplier Diversity Initiative. Keynote speaker Brent Friedman discussed the business case for including for including LGBTBE-certified businesses in corporate supplier diversity initiatives.

plexus sponsor profile



"The Cleveland Clinic is proud to work with community partners like Plexus to help increase regional market share for under-represented vendors through our Supplier Diversity Program. We believe that by working with qualified Minority, Female and LGBT owned businesses in Northeast Ohio, the Cleveland Clinic helps foster a more vibrant, inclusive and economically healthy region for everyone."

- Amy Hochadel, Director, Office of Diversity, Cleveland Clinic Foundation

2009 chamber sponsors



Sponsors of Plexus' 2009 Supplier Diversity Summit



2009 community supporters



round table series

Plexus launched its Round Table Series for small business owners in the fall of 2009, sponsored by Chamber member and Bronze-level sponsor KeyBank. Banking experts led attendees through critical aspects of getting a new business up and running, or how to make an existing business more successful.

SESSION 1

What You Need to Know When Starting a New Business

Key Bank Executives guided participants through the critical stages of developing a business plan to present to potential funders and investors.

SESSION 2

Establishing a Business Banking Relationship

Key components of the business banking relationship, including: bank criteria for extending credit; fraud prevention & the importance of protecting client information; special services for small business clients; and what to look for From a Business bank.

SESSION 3

Understanding Cash Flow Management & Forecasting

Vital aspects of responsible financial management.

- Elements to a successful budget
- Tools to help a business manage Cash flow
- Key formulas & ratios that banks look at when analyzing cash flow
- Best Practices for managing AP/AR

Special thanks to Plexus member and Bronze-level sponsor



business members

AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland*

Ambiance, The Store for Lovers!*

American Greetings Corporation*

Arhaus Furniture*

Bella Capelli Sanctuario

Charter One Bank*

Cleveland Clinic Foundation*

Cleveland Corporate Caterers*

Cleveland International Film Festival

Cleveland Play House

Cleveland Synergy Foundation

Compass Consulting Services

Continental Airlines*

Doan Brook Company LLC

Enterprise Rent-A-Car

Ernst & Young*

FASTSIGNS Bedford Heights

FIT Resources†

Forward Thought†

Freedom Valley

Future Light

Gray's Auctioneers†

Great Lakes Science Center

Herb Ascherman Photography*

Key Bank*

Leverage Technologies†

LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland*

Linear Creative†

North Coast Men's Chorus

Raymond James Financial Services, Inc.

Snazzo Productions

Square Night Club

Trinity Cathedral

**Also a Plexus sponsor*

†Certified LGBT-Owned business

Plexus would also like to acknowledge and extend appreciation to its many individual members: professionals, retirees and students from all over Northeast Ohio.

plexus member profile

"We joined Plexus because we're proud to be a part of the LGBT business community. Our recent certification as an LGBT-owned business makes us excited to be a partner with Plexus and the NGLCC* as we work with other organizations to make this region inclusive and economically successful."

Linear Creative is a marketing and advertising agency that specializes in innovative design to successfully increase product value that complements marketing strategies.

**National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce*



The Staff at Linear Creative

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