We have come to the close of the Foundation’s second full year of programming for LGBT-focused Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). Last year we brought together a small group from existing ERGs to help determine what would be the most beneficial programming we could provide, and created a list of possible topics. We then reached out to the ERGs and their members to help prioritize the topics and then with the help of this group we determined what would be included in the series for 2012. I would like to express our great appreciation to Eric Brown from KeyBank, Humberto Sanchez from the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, and Ronald Ondeyko from American Greetings for their time and assistance with this important task.

In 2012 we delivered five events on a broad range of topics. I would like to thank the various organizations that hosted events during 2012; their support was vital to the success of the program and greatly appreciated. We continue to believe that having the various ERGs and their companies host these events provides a valuable opportunity for members from other ERGs to learn about the organizations and cultures of their peers. And, a very special thanks goes to Progressive Insurance for providing a tour of their extraordinary art collection a rare and appreciated opportunity!

Also, during 2012, the Foundation was pleased to participate in continuing education at University Hospitals by presenting a series on the treatment of the transgender community. The Foundation is happy to provide support of the development and delivery of specialized education to organizations regarding issues in the LGBT community.

Again for the 2013 Foundation ERG series we have assembled a small group of ERG leaders to assist in the development of programming for 2013. In the past, the series has concentrated on how to support and develop individual ERGs at each corporation, but moving forward we’re exploring the idea of expanding programming to serve members across several ERGs. We are excited about the possibilities and very grateful for the help and assistance from the various ERGs in developing the programming.

Finally, on a personal note, I would like to thank everyone that has continued to support the work and mission of the Plexus Education Foundation. Without your input and assistance, none of what we have achieved would have happened. Our goal in 2013 is to determine how we can best serve LGBT professionals and business owners in coming years.

Thomas Hawn
Foundation Board President

The Plexus Education Foundation was founded in December 2008 as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. The mission of the Foundation is to improve the workplace environment for LGBT individuals through education, research, development, and advocacy, resulting in enrichment of the entire community and region.

2012 was a year of opportunities and challenges for Plexus and the LGBT and Allied business communities. While we saw local companies posting profits and stable earnings, we still heard tales from friends and neighbors who faced lay-offs or had to close their business due to restructuring or lost sales. These stories only emphasize the importance of the work we do at the Chamber, helping to stabilize LGBT enterprises and bring about a stronger economy for our entire region. Together I hope we can share in our accomplishments.

Over the past year we saw growth in three key areas: attendance, sponsorship and organizational capacity. First, we greatly expanded the reach of our programming. Our program committee honed in on key events that created value for our members which saw an increase in attendance by almost 25 percent. Second, our Supplier Diversity Summit committee secured our first ever Presenting Sponsor but also a 150 percent increase in overall support for this event. Finally, in 2012 we began documenting our process by committee and program to better analyze the value we bring to our members and sponsors.

We all can be proud of these accomplishments but we also know there is more work to be done. We need to grow our membership among both LGBT and Allied small businesses. This expanded membership will bring about a growing number of LGBT certified businesses that will have access to the supplier diversity initiatives that our sponsors have in place. We also know that we must work with a host of companies and show them that supplier diversity is not just the right thing to do but also the right business strategy for their bottom line.

We have many goals for 2013. You – our members and supporters – will be an active part in achieving these goals. We welcome your participation, your comments and your support. In return we will continue to be a leading voice and premier resource that empowers lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and allied businesses to overcome biases and achieve a thriving, inclusive, and diverse business community.

Eric Lutzo
Chamber Board President

The Plexus Chamber of Commerce was organized in 2006, as a 501(c)(6) trade organization, and made its debut at Cleveland Pride that year. Its mission is to promote and advocate for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Allied businesses, and is a catalyst for economic vitality in Northeast Ohio. Plexus is a network that helps member businesses improve, develop, and grow. Membership is open to everyone - from business owners, professionals, students, and retirees.
Thanks to a grant from the Key Foundation and KeyBank, the Foundation held a series of five events for LGBT-focused Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) in 2012. The series is designed to not only support the existing corporate ERGs in the region, but to also foster the growth of new groups, and to provide them with resources and guidance to be successful.

March: Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District
At this first event of the year, hosted by NEORSD, attending ERGs discussed the issue of mentoring. Participants explored the concept of “mentoring circles,” in which small groups of individuals meet, and each member is both a mentor and a mentee, depending on their area of expertise. They also learned about “reverse mentoring,” in which more experienced individuals within an organization can learn about some of the skills and technology being used by newer staff, and how this sort of information-sharing can benefit an organization.

June: University Hospitals Seidman Cancer Center
At the second event, hosted at University Hospitals, participants explored models of organization and leadership for ERGs. How can ERGs and their host corporations foster the development of new leaders? How does the maturity of an ERG impact its effectiveness within the organization? How can an ERG leverage the expertise and influence of allies?

August: Progressive Insurance
At the third event, hosted on the campus of Progressive Insurance, participants discussed how to deal with regionalism in a large organization with a broad geographic dispersion of employees. Attendees also were treated to a tour of the Progressive art collection. The collection, rarely seen by non-employees, is one of the most extensive collections of modern art.

October: KeyBank
At the fourth event, hosted by KeyBank, participants discussed how to work with other ERGs and affinity groups within a corporation. Non-LGBT focused ERGs were invited to attend this event, in order to create more dialogue through different and varied perspectives, and to add richness to the conversation.

December: Ritz-Carlton
The final event of the year was graciously hosted by the Ritz-Carlton hotel in downtown Cleveland. Attendees reviewed some of the lessons learned over the course of 2012 and how they were able to implement some of these practices within their own organizations. Participants also celebrated the holiday season, and discussed topics for 2013. Special thanks to the ERGs at KeyBank, Morgan Stanley, PNC, and Progressive for planning and supporting this event.

Plexus facilitates regular networking nights that are free and open to the community, thanks to the support of our 2012 Network Nights sponsor CharterOne Bank. These events provide an opportunity for members and guests to network in the LGBT & Allied business community. These events are held at a range of different venues, and often feature a speaker or special activity. Attendees can expand their professional network and gain information and insight from decision-makers and trend-setters in Northeast Ohio.

COSE, Playhouse Square Cleveland: In January Plexus held its annual meeting at COSE’s new headquarters in Playhouse Square. Nearly 200 attendees were on hand as Plexus informed members and the public about the accomplishments of 2011 and shared plans for 2012.

Shaker Square Cinemas, Shaker Square Cleveland: Always one of Plexus’ most popular network nights, attendees at the March Networking Night got a sneak peek at some of the entries in the 36th Annual Cleveland International Film Festival. The evening included a conversation with CIFF leaders, Bill Guentzler and Mallory Martin.

Greater Cleveland Sports Commission, E. 4th Street Cleveland: In May, attendees heard from the staff and board of the 2014 Gay Games, with an update on plans for the sporting and culture events, and learn ways for individuals, companies and other organizations to get involved in the event, and stay informed about its project.

Shooters on the Water, The Flats Cleveland: In August, Plexus held its second annual “Summer Social.” The event provided a casual evening with great opportunities to network with other business people, catch up on Plexus news, and experience unique views of the city and the lake.

Pura Vida Restaurant, Public Square Cleveland: Attendees at the October Network Night learned about exciting work taking place on the East Bank of the Flats. Adam Fishman of Fairmount Properties provided an update on the $500+ million riverfront redevelopment, and Plexus sponsor Ernst & Young also shared information about its role in the project, and plans for its new headquarters in the neighborhood.
Collectively, they bring Full Color Printings Cleveland-based and co-owners of Jeff Blazek are partners in the design and print industries, and are committed to delivering our expertise, learning from other Plexus members and supporters, and building lasting relationships along the way. As partners and co-owners, they bring more than 25 years of experience in the service printing company that specializes in creative finishes and solutions for all printing needs. As both partners and co-owners, they bring more than 25 years of experience in the design and print industries, and are committed to delivering the highest-quality products at competitive prices as efficiently as possible.

In 2012, FCP became nationally certified through the NGLCC as a 100 percent LGBT-owned business, as another way to help differentiate their services. Furthermore, they view certification as a way to benefit their existing clients, by supporting the diverse-spending goals of those organizations that already have supplier initiatives.

FCP serves clients across the US from their office in Cleveland’s Edgewater neighborhood. To learn more about their services, visit FullColorPrintings.com or GayPrinters.com.

As a Plexus member and a straight ally, I proudly stand for the ideal that every human being should be treated equally and with respect. The original position on this matter goes back more than three decades. As an active duty sailor in the US Navy in the 1970s, I wasn’t even aware there were gay people. At a point in my life where I was forced to address the injustice, I didn’t take long to realize that many of my friends faced the same frustration.

The United States military, more like any organization, is an entity whose culture and policies must be changed. In 1981, Lisa, a lesbian, was discharged from the Navy. This had been an excellent sailor, but she was being discharged because she was a lesbian. As an ally, I was determined to find out what I could do about it. Although I was pained that I couldn’t help her

At the house, I found my friend distraught. She told me she was being discharged, because she was a lesbian. I was shocked; I told her I didn’t know what I could do about it. My membership in Plexus is a tangible statement of my support as a member of the LGBTQ community.

One day, a woman from my ship didn’t show up for work. We were told she was being discharged, because she was a lesbian. I was shocked; I told her I didn’t know what I could do about it.
Plexus kicked off its 4th annual Supplier Diversity Summit with a reception at the beautiful Ruhlman Conference Center atop University Hospital’s Lerner Tower, with gorgeous views of the Cleveland skyline, University Circle and Lake Erie. The event, hosted by UH and Wells Fargo Advisors, provided participants an opportunity to chat and network in advance of the next day’s events, and to hear directly from the evening’s sponsors about why they have chosen to emphasize supplier diversity within their own organizations, and how support for Plexus aligns with those efforts.

The Summit continued the next morning in the Fenn Tower Ballroom on the campus of summit host Cleveland State University. Rockwell Automation, the Summit’s first ever Presenting Sponsor, provided support that resulted in more than 75 diverse business owners and supplier diversity professionals from across the region and nation, gathering to explore ways to advance their business and supplier goals.

Participants started their day with an overview of supplier diversity. Facilitated by Sam McClure of the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, this interactive session spotlighted the importance of business certification. Attendees heard success stories from business owners and supplier diversity leaders. The Summit continued with a showcase of some of the cutting-edge practices in supplier diversity. Participants learned about programs that are moving corporations and their diverse suppliers to the next level of business success.

Keynote speaker Neil Cerbone, founder and president of the award-winning consulting firm Neil Cerbone & Associates helped attendees better understand the world of supplier diversity, as well as its challenges and opportunities. Cerbone shared several key truths that make for effective business engagements, and challenged participants to evaluate their own efforts.

Plexus thanks its sponsors and supporters for making the Summit a success. These companies, organizations and individuals allow Plexus to continue its trajectory of growth and provide members with meaningful programs like the Summit.

The summit planning committee attributes the success of this event to the insight provided earlier in the year, through a survey of Plexus membership and former summit attendees. As a result, the duration of the summit was shortened by several hours, with increased opportunities for networking. Based on a follow-up survey, the changes garnered universally positive comments from all participants, including 60 percent of them indicating their Summit experience was “Excellent”.

Plexus will start planning next year’s Summit in the first quarter of 2013. If you are interested in being part of the committee or having your organization involved, contact Ray Jasinski at ray@linearcreative.com.

**Survey Response Quote:**

What information will you be able to take back to your workplace?

Even though I am an ally and can’t be LGBT-certified, I can still leverage my relationships at Plexus. Neil spent some time with me after the 2nd panel […] that alone was worth the price of admission! I met so many wonderful folks there. I will definitely attend every year this event is offered. THANK YOU!
The cause of supplier diversity has a great champion in Scott Hardwick, Manager of Strategic Sourcing and Supplier Diversity at Rockwell Automation. "Supporting Plexus gets more important every day," he says. "It's not only the right thing to do, but it's the right business decision. More and more, our customers look to see what Rockwell is doing in this arena."

In 2012, Hardwick secured Rockwell's support for the 4th annual Plexus Supplier Diversity Summit, becoming the event's first presenting sponsor. The company's commitment to the summit allowed Plexus to bring in nationally-recognized speakers like business consultant Neil Cerbone to Cleveland to share his expertise with local entrepreneurs and others.

"For me, the Plexus summit is important because it's a great forum to meet potential vendors and engage with other supplier diversity professionals," adds Hardwick. "Rockwell was proud to be the presenting sponsor and help contribute its success."

Hardwick sees the benefits of Rockwell's engagement with Plexus continuing to grow. "We plan to join the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce because of the value we've had with Plexus," he says. "I am exploring supplier opportunities with several local LGBT vendors, and hope to forge some at the national level too."

Rockwell is also launching its first LGBT employee resource group. The Plexus Educational Foundation has been instrumental in the development of these groups, which help make Northeast Ohio a more inclusive place to work.

"I am excited by our partnership with Plexus," said Hardwick. "It has helped to make Rockwell a more competitive company and has improved the economic environment in our region."

In the wake of a series of tragic LGBT youth suicides, the Plexus Chamber and Plexus Foundation, Linear Creative, and the North Coast Men's Chorus joined together to spearhead a community-wide event in April of 2012 called "Break the Silence, A Joyful Noise." This unique event brought together more than 600 individuals from across Northeast Ohio to cap the end of the "National Day of Silence," a day of action, observed across the US and internationally, when students in schools and universities vow to remain silent to call attention to the silencing effect of anti-LGBT bullying and harassment.

Held at the Terrace Club at Progressive Field, attendees gathered to celebrate diversity and tolerance and call for an end to bullying in our schools. In addition to a special performance by the Chorus and moving remarks from Ohio State Representative Nickie Antonio, leaders from GLSEN were on hand to share how everyone can play a role in bringing an end to tolerance for the culture of bullying.

Since its founding in 1996, the "National Day of Silence" has become the largest national student-led action towards creating safer schools, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. GLSEN became the official organizational sponsor in 2001 and its organizing efforts have led to the participation of more than 10,000 middle schools, high schools, and universities across the country.

Nearly 30 local businesses and nonprofits contributed time, staff and resources to help make the event a reality. "It was extremely gratifying to see so many people come together to bring about this successful evening," said Plexus board member, Chorus board member & event chairperson Ray Jasinski.

Break the Silence Community Partners: AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland | Anti-Defamation League | Chinti | Cleveland Play House | Cleveland Pride | Cowell & Hubbard | Dare 2 Care | Gay Games 9 | G2H2 | Human Rights Campaign | L'Abatros | The Legacy Group | LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland | Movement in Black | Panda Promotions | Parallax | PFLAG Cleveland | Quez Media Marketing | Riot Creative Imaging | The Search Circus | Table 45 | Toledo Pride | Vision Video | Windsong | Wh2
Plexus sponsor and certified LGBT-owned business FIT Technologies was honored with the Grand Prize “Wellness@Work Award” for employers with fewer than 250 employees, sponsored by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. The award recognizes Northern Ohio businesses that provide the healthiest work environments and incorporate sustainable practices into the workplace.

The judges were impressed with several components of FIT’s wellness program, including the breadth of benefits and topics, the ability for staff to earn money to offset their insurance premiums, and the strong support of community fitness events. FIT co-founder Michelle Tomallo, who leads the company’s wellness initiatives, said, “We are honored to be recognized and to be part of the wellness movement in our region. The energy we devote to our program has a positive impact on our staff and provides an opportunity for creativity, learning and motivation to improve our lifestyles.”

FIT Technologies offers a full range of customized solutions, including managed infrastructure and hosting, cloud services, needs assessment, field support, help desk, disaster recovery, and unified communications services, and IT projects. FIT serves clients in Northeast Ohio and around the country from its headquarters in Cleveland’s Playhouse Square District. For more information visit them online at FitTechnologies.com.

Quez member and certified minority-owned business Quez Media Marketing was awarded “MBE Supplier of the Year” by the Northern Ohio Minority Supplier Development Council, at the 2012 annual NOMSDC Awards gala. The award recognizes certified Minority Business Enterprises that specialize in a specific product or service supply. One of nine nominees, Quez received the award after being nominated for the second year in a row.

“Quez is honored to have received this prestigious award,” said VP of Sales & Marketing Gina Dalessandro. “It is a wonderful reminder of the work we have done, and will motivate us as we seek to continuously improve our efforts to support the economy, fellow MBEs, and the Northern Ohio community.”

Quez Media Marketing is a total marketing communications provider. Its technology and creativity enable organizations to implement targeted, personalized cross media campaigns. They also provide online storefronts, data services, website design and development, creative services, print production and fulfillment, tele-prospecting and promotional products. Quez serves clients across the US from its headquarters in downtown Cleveland; for more information, visit them online at QuezMedia.com.

five fabulous ways to get connected

There are many ways to connect with Plexus. Whether you’re a member or not, here are five ways to consider getting involved:

1. Volunteer at a Plexus event. Many people are surprised to learn that Plexus is completely volunteer-operated, with no paid staff to help with coordination or programming. Its success over the past six years is due to the dedication and hard work of hundreds of people across Northeast Ohio, who have given countless hours to make Plexus’ events successful.

2. Join a committee. For individuals who can commit to ongoing participation, Plexus has a number of committees where you can help make an impact on the future of this growing organization. From events, to marketing, to membership, and others, Plexus can benefit from your expertise.

3. Get certified as an LGBT-owned business. As an affiliate of the National Gay & Lesbian Chambers of Commerce, Plexus can assist LGBT business owners in obtaining official certification as a minority business enterprise. This can help make your business eligible for contracts with corporations and government agencies that operate under supplier diversity initiatives. Certification can be a catalyst for increasing revenue, but it also helps make a clear statement about the important role LGBT-owned businesses play in the economy of our region and our nation.

4. Host a Plexus event or program. From Chamber Network Nights to the Foundation’s Leadership Series, Plexus events typically draw upwards of 100 people. By hosting an event at your business or organization, you not only raise awareness about the services you provide, but you also demonstrate that you value LGBT customers and support an inclusive business environment.

5. Become a Plexus sponsor. In addition to the countless volunteer hours that go into running its annual programming and events, Plexus relies on the generous support of its sponsors to make it all happen. While our sponsorships start at $2,500, Plexus understands that not every business can make a cash commitment. That’s why Plexus works with a number of organizations for in-kind sponsorships for a wide range of services and products. You can help Plexus succeed and grow by offering to do just a little bit of what your business does best, and gain some recognition in the community for being a supporter and advocate of the LGBT business community.

For more information about getting involved with Plexus, visit us online at www.ThinkPlexus.org, email us at info@thinkplexus.org, or call us at 1-800-PLEXUS-9.

We look forward to seeing more of you in 2013 and beyond.
Plexus would also like to acknowledge and extend appreciation to its many individual members: professionals, retirees and students from all over Northeast Ohio.

(S) plexus sponsor  (C) certified lgbt-owned business
### Plexus Chamber Board of Directors

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>Eric Lutzo</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Forward Thought</td>
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<td>James S. Simon</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Buckingham, Doolittle &amp; Burroughs, LLP</td>
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<td>Andrew Small</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>OverDrive, Inc.</td>
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<td>Gina Dalessandro</td>
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<td>Quéz Media Marketing</td>
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<td>Ray Jasinski</td>
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<td>Timothy McCue</td>
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<td>William J &amp; Dorothy K O'Neill Foundation</td>
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<td>Michelle Tomallo</td>
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<td>Jonah Weinberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas Hawn</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Morgan Stanley</td>
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<td>Steven Licciardi</td>
<td>Vice President, Treasurer &amp; Secretary</td>
<td>Trinity Episcopal Cathedral</td>
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<td>John R. Corlett</td>
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<td>The MetroHealth System</td>
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<td>The Very Rev. Tracey Lind</td>
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Special thanks to Plexus sponsor for the printing of this annual report.