



Exploring Prevention Audio Library  
Series 2, Episode 11

# Preventing Violence through Community Building with The Harbor and Lower Columbia Q Center

Total time: 35min, 52sec

*This episode features Julia Aikman (Prevention Program Coordinator/Lead Sexual Assault Advocate) and Jenny Feldman (LGBTQ+ Outreach Coordinator) from The Harbor, Ben DeFrancisco (Coordinator) at the Lower Columbia Q Center, and Megan Foster (Prevention Program Coordinator) at SATF.*

Meg: Thank you for listening to this short recording, I'm Meg Foster, Prevention Program Coordinator at the Sexual Assault Task Force. In this series of SATF's Exploring Prevention Audio Library, we connect with people across Oregon to learn more about creative violence and abuse prevention ideas. Today we are joined by Julia, Jenny, and Ben from The Harbor and Q Center in Clatsop County. Welcome, everyone.

Jenny: Thanks for having us.

Meg: Yeah, can we get started with some introductions? Do you want to introduce yourselves, your organizations, and tell us a little bit about your roles?

Julia: Sure. My name is Julia Aikman, and I am the Prevention Program Coordinator, and Lead Sexual Assault Advocate for The Harbor here in Clatsop County, Astoria. And my pronouns are she/her. And I lead our prevention efforts. I implement programs in the schools. I teach about bystander intervention at the college and, and then in the community, I work very closely with Jenny who is here, and Ben is here as well, working with youth who identify as LGBTQIA+ doing prevention work in the Q Center's youth program. Jenny and I are also, we do an Instagram called Forget the Fairytale for youth, where we have different posts about healthy relationships, consent, and just sexual assault prevention. We also are starting a podcast called Forget the Fairytale and hope to be using our recordings at the local public radio station here in Clatsop County, KMUN Coastal Radio. Jenny.

Jenny: Hi, I'm Jenny Feldman. They or She pronouns. I am the LGBTQ+ Outreach Coordinator at The Harbor in Astoria serving all of Clatsop County and sometimes surrounding areas, and I started at The Harbor as an intern working with Julia, doing prevention, like outreach at schools for my senior BSW fieldwork placement, and then got hired when they started this new position and I'm also doing some intern work for my master's program I just started doing one on one counseling at The Harbor, which has been really fun. And a lot of what I do is youth outreach. That's my passion. That's where most of my life experience is in partnership with Ben, at the Q Center, Ben.



## Exploring Prevention Audio Library Series 2, Episode 11

Ben: Thank you. My name is Ben, my pronouns are They or He, and I'm the program coordinator at the Lower Columbia Q Center or LCQC or the Q Center here in Astoria, Oregon. And we are a nonprofit resource center, providing outreach, education, and charity for the LGBTQ2SIA+ community and their allies here in the Lower Columbia region of Oregon, and in Washington, as well. So we work really closely with The Harbor and a couple other organizations in town to do education, outreach. We work with the hospital as well to maintain healthy relations and communication as well. So it's, it's really an honor to be here and to be connected with so many amazing organizations here in Astoria.

Meg: Thank you all so much for being here. I'm so excited to hear more about your work I know you all do so much work in Clatsop County from that youth-focused work to the larger community organizing and other work. But you all kind of touched on these partnerships with each other, and that key part of your work of, you know, between the Q Center and The Harbor, and I'm wondering if we could dive a little bit deeper into what some of those efforts look like. Julia, do you want to get us started?

Julia: Sure, absolutely. So, so happy to see that the SATF was announcing the, for candidates for the Rape Prevention Education Grant. I told my supervisor, who's the executive director, Terry Steenburgen, 'so oh gosh we had to apply for this.' It was a grant that I received at a nonprofit DVSA agency in Oklahoma that funded my position for three years down there in rural Oklahoma. So I just knew how wonderful it was and how beneficial the money and the guidance was. So, lo and behold we were awarded the grant, and received it Summer 2020, I believe. So got on board, had teachers reaching out to us from really small towns here in, in Clatsop County and asking us to come in to do prevention work and doing healthy relationships classes.

And, also in the grant, we wrote that we wanted to work with specific populations; the Job Corps, youth at the Job Corps site here called Tongue Point, as well as continuing our work partnering with the Q Center, and working with youth there. So I'm really excited that we are continuing to branch out; that we received some additional funding from the government or SATF to have to purchase technology equipment that we could use specifically to reach youth all over the county, such as the podcast equipment. And, you know, PR wants to stereo equipment PR stuff. Software, just because we didn't - it was the unknown - are we going to be back in the classroom presenting? Are we going to be just doing zoom presentations, online platforms? So that was really exciting. So much has happened, so much good stuff actually has been happening, in the work that we do, during this time. So, and then once again like Jenny said Jenny was kind of my, my co facilitator cohort, and Jenny, would you like to talk a little bit about how we work together.

Jenny: Yeah, I would love to. It was, it was really fun when I started, we were just doing zoom meetings, and believe we were going into Knappa and Warrenton High Schools, and I think a lot of what we saw. There's, you know, we saw a lot of queer, specifically queer youth that we're reaching out I think just having some representation in the classroom. From what we've been told like there really aren't out gay teachers at those schools. So, you know, it was just so nice for me to be able to like say my pronouns and then we started this anonymous virtual question box and we were starting to get questions about 'how do I come out' or like 'I was so happy to see your pronouns and I'm scared to share mine but I think, I might be they/them too' and just sweet things like that as well as all of the questions around



## Exploring Prevention Audio Library Series 2, Episode 11

consent and healthy relationships and abuse at home. So, yeah, going into the schools, even by zoom was just huge and then The Harbor created this thing, and got the funding for my position and were hiring for it and I just jumped at the chance.

Meg: I think that's one of the things that we don't often think about with lots of county and I say this as like an outsider outside of Clatsop County is like it's easy to just like think about it as Astoria, and not really think about this, this breadth of communities that exist in the surrounding areas in particular, and arguably have some really isolated frontier communities in a small county that is near the coast and I've been learning a lot about it, working with you all. But it's interesting those pieces of that you know it's easy to just be like oh it's just Astoria, which no county is ever just like the one place right but, um, I think, I knew a lot less about Clatsop County before starting to work with you all. As you all have gotten that that kind of increased investment and doing some of this work. What has that partnership with the Q center, how is that grown and what is that currently look like?

Julia: So, within the grant, our goals, and our requirements were we reconnected, so to speak, with the LCQC. And my director was really adamant, she was also new, pretty new at the time that we applied for the grant, was adamant about rebuilding that relationship with the Q Center. And so it just was like a win-win like oh that's our youth program, may we please come in and talk about prevention and healthy relationships. And I remember going there just as a guest, just to serve and to build rapport with the youth and the facilitator at the time. And Ben was volunteering that night, as well. And so I got to meet Ben and then a couple weeks later, like a month later, Ben got this amazing position like the only employee of the Q Center. Ben, I don't want to speak for you. Can I pass it on to you?

Ben: Oh sure, yeah. So, that is how I started with the Q and how I first connected with Julia, volunteering at the Q Center with the youth program. And then yeah, we received a grant that allowed them to have their first employee. And I went through the process, and they picked me, which was such like such a joy and such an honor to be able to have that, have just, I don't know that that joy, you know is so cool. So, you know, working with Julia and working with The Harbor with this youth group, we could just see so much potential. And so much benefit for the kids because they were really engaged in the conversations that we would have. And I felt really great having somebody like Julia there who has the credentials who can hold that space as an advocate versus like a, like a reporter of sorts. So it, it felt like a really safe space for kids to be able to ask questions and communicate and learn from each other. So, yeah, it's just, it's been a really beautiful adventure and then with COVID kind of happening, we shifted into more of like a virtual space. And then with that, like, you know, Jenny and I kind of took the lead with this group and yeah it's, it's just been great. I don't... Jenny, do you have any comments on that, Julia?

Jenny: Yeah, I'm just thinking about, well we're on hiatus right now but Ben and I like once I got hired to we're probably started around the same time I'm thinking. We just started collaborating and we started Rainbow Family Circle, which was a support group for parents and caregivers of LGBTQ+ youth of all ages and we had a lot of success with that, especially you know supporting parents who might not be totally on board and I feel like we had a really good synergy where you know we built rapport with these parents and gain trust and started to help them see like how the connection was the most important thing and the whole factor of violence prevention behind that of like your child's, all the risks, go down,



## Exploring Prevention Audio Library Series 2, Episode 11

if you are their person, if you're solid and there for them. So like we had some really beautiful moments with that and I think especially this summer when we had our brief kind of reprieve where, if you're vaccinated and you're outside everything's cool. We did a lot of groups in person at parks, which was lovely and we got a lot better participation that way, including Closet Cleaners, the youth group we were doing that at the park and having crafts and that was just lovely. It is, our big challenge is, going back to Zoom definitely, but we have ongoing part we have like our core group of participants and then new youth rotating in and out.

Julia: I just have to say I remember coming to visit as a guest, and Ben and Jenny have the little shelter area at the park all set up and I was bringing a button maker that we did purchase using SATF RPE funds, and, um, the day that I was there, we were making pronoun buttons. And we're making all kinds of fun buttons and having snacks and just seeing like, I don't know how many kids are there maybe, fifteen. Um, it was a good group, and it was a nice day out, and it was just so nice to see everybody together again. And it was so close to the high school as well so the park is right next to the high school, so as soon as school was done, the kids could come. Students I should say. The youth, they could come down to the shelter and just have a really nice end to the day. It was nice to see like how they're interacting with Jenny and Ben as well. And you had already built that rapport and I think, Jenny you knew some of them from GSA?

Jenny: Yeah, actually when I moved out here I, the first thing I did was I got involved with volunteering to help run Astoria Middle School GSA which like, mind-blown, there's like this huge GSA at Astoria Middle School, it is kind of the dream little queer community out here. So I was able to build rapport with those kids, some of whom are, but we have a lot of newbies too, so I think they have a great, a lot of them have moved to the high school and Ben goes and visits the Rainbow Alliance at Astoria High School, while I'm going over to Warrenton High School to visit, their GSA, kind of splitting divide-and-conquer. But it is really nice. I like what Ben said of having the two of us because I can be the confidential advocate and I can get those, if anyone wants to disclose anything, it is a nice like having that kind of tag team, and then Ben has all the training through The Harbor also so has all kinds of knowledge around that.

Ben: Yeah, so a couple months ago, I was officially on-boarded as one of their on-call advocates.

Meg: I feel like you all are highlighting so many different things, my brain is like jumping from thing to thing and I think like, one of the things that standing out, right is the ways that, especially when organizations and communities are under-resourced, like you work together to more meaningfully impact the communities which is amazing because one of the things we often talk about is like prevention is only possible when we're like, all working together. You can't just have like one person that's leading prevention because that works against the goal of kind of universal adoption. So it's really cool to hear those ways that you all have have worked together and overlapped, and also recognizing that some of that overlap, historically, and presently may have been the result of like, lack of resources in a community and one of the things that I was really hearing you talk about is, you talked about some of those like education components of your programming, but I'm also hearing this really strong element of like just building community for the queer community in Clatsop County and the different



## Exploring Prevention Audio Library Series 2, Episode 11

ways that you're kind of doing that and that need for for community. So you you've mentioned a couple different activities that you're working on, including the Closet Cleaners and I forget what you had said the rainbow something parents...

Jenny: Rainbow Family Circle

Meg: Rainbow Family Circle. There were too many words there, I remembered rainbow though. Because you later said Rainbow Alliance and I was like 'which one was it?' so... So you have these different activities like, especially knowing that there's such limited capacity, between these different efforts, and that real need for community across the county, um, what has led you to these different activities? Why did you like focusing on some of these things? Why are you focusing some of your outreach in the ways that you are? What kind of led you all to where you are today?

Jenny: For me, I come from Long Beach, California and then spent five years in Portland, so, and I've done all my work with queer youth in both of those places through Queer Rock Camp and moving to Portland was just like... Oh by the way, I have three grown children, all of whom are queer and/or trans, so just seeing how over-resourced Portland honestly is for queer youth like when we moved there my kids were like, 'I don't know what to do tonight there's three different queer youth events happening in town.' And then I came here, and it's like there's nothing and this was has kind of been my career goal is, I want to be someplace where I'm actually helping to make things happen, that needs you know that needs work to be done. So that was like moving here was, my partner is a therapist; I'm working on becoming a therapist. We wanted to be somewhere that's under-resourced. Yeah just seeing like there's so many opportunities here, and I have, like on an informal basis supported parents over the years. I've had my kids have both, you know, gone through like surgery and hormones and all that stuff so I've talked to other parents through that. So, it was just so great having Ben to partner with, like, I think we just work so well together and I'm, you know, offering like a non-judgmental space I think it's so important both of us come from that place of like, we're going to meet you where you're at and we just want to, doing what's best for your kid means like being accepting of you and your beliefs and working with you, however, we have to. And I think all three of us are good at building community and like, understanding that you can't go in with your guns blazing like you have to make friends with the principal and you know, kiss up to them a little bit and you know you have to win people over to your side and, which is is new for me. I'm, you know, I'm a city person so just coming in with that cultural humility of like, this is their place. I can't be like, this is how we do in Portland, yo. You have to have respect for how things have been done. You gonna say something, Ben?

Ben: Oh, I was just definitely going to piggyback off of that like there is a very strong culture here. And there's, like, you know like, pride, which is so beautiful. So, like, I'm also kind of an outsider; I'm from Chicago. So coming into Astoria with like that big city energy and then like, 'Hey small town' like you don't want to, like, you want to do what's best for the community, but you don't want to make the waves too big where it like rocks everybody off their boat, like everybody has to kind of be in the same flow. And that's why listening to the community needs is really, really important. So, kind of like how we, like how we decided to move forward with certain things is really listening to the community and we noticed that like Jenny was saying like there is a need for queer youth space. And on the flip side of that



## Exploring Prevention Audio Library Series 2, Episode 11

there is a need for education with like parents and adults of these queer youth, and they have to be in balance otherwise like you know that boats just gonna rock too much. So it's it's like that gentle balance game, but I love it, I love it here so much.

Jenny: And then just being able to go to schools, to schools with Julia was just a natural way for me to you know get approached by queer kids who wanted to know about GSAs and how do they start one and just being able to empower them with like, um, you have a legal right to start this here like here's all the information. We'll give you all of this information and I was able to do a presentation at the LCQC about how to start a GSA. Ben and I have both done trainings around town too on like supporting queer youth. Not that that's everything, I mean Julia and I are also working a lot with just, you know, I say like, I support the straights too. But so much of what we have done here is supporting queer youth, making schools safer for all kids is what the research shows.

Julia: I was just going to say and it's very interesting too like, when Jenny talks about what she does, and, and the programs at the Q Center. We get these anonymous questions as well from straight allies, like how can I better support my friends. And how can I start you know a program or GSA. So it's just, it's neat to see how this is evolving. You know when we have these struggles with administration and with schoolboards. But these kids, they want to do these programs, they want to make a change. And like Ben said, you know, they're, they're doing it gradually, and I think they're also being very careful. And, I think we're the right people like, like you said, Jenny, like having those people, those parents that are supportive, or those teachers, that's just going to help. I'm just so excited about all the possibilities.

Jenny: And the kids are going to drag their parents in the future.

Julia: Yes.

Meg: I love that and I hope so. Right like I think you all have highlighted so many examples of youth organizing as well and like youth calling for these spaces and youth calling for this information and these tools and these resources, and that unfortunately sometimes, or a lot of times, adults are one of the, I don't know what the right word is, maybe roadblocks, to like moving forward. And I think right we can be generous and think that a lot of times that's rooted in a lack of that information or education like a fear of of something that we don't know. And so there's so much opportunity there, and I think you all too are highlighting just how much like the impact of seeing adults in their lives that represent some of their identities right. And we know like research has shown that when folks are interacting with and have access to people who are educators or community members or other folks that represent identities that they are a part of, it increases their likelihood to engage, their protective factors against violence, their likelihood to engage in healthy relationships and access community and, and all of these things. We know that like just your presence in and of itself is a protective factor against violence. But it goes so much further than that right and I think you really are too touching on like lifting up those youth voices that are, as you said Jenny, dragging those those other folks in their lives into the future I think you said. Um, are there any particular successes that you you wanted to highlight across the different activities y'all are doing?



## Exploring Prevention Audio Library Series 2, Episode 11

Julia: I have to say that we wrote into the RPE grant that one of the populations we wanted to meet was Tongue Point Job Corps. And during the start of the pandemic, students were not on campus. Only the students who had really troubled home life were allowed back on campus, but any of the new students, you know, because of the government's law about not, you know, having any new students on campus, they had to stay home and they're coming all over the country. And so, just recently, probably back in September, we were allowed to come into some of the job readiness classes and talk about our prevention work and our services, which was really exciting and we had a lot of students from all over the country who are just waiting to come to Oregon, you know ask if they could be a part of some of our support groups, and if they could learn about bystander intervention. They were asking 'if I have a problem may I call your crisis line, even if I'm in Rhode Island?' Um, you know - are you going to report, these are kids that are under 18. So, it was just nice that we are all the way out here in Oregon the support from youth all over the place, virtually or over the phone. And to hear like Jenny would talk about your program at the Q or like wanting to do the healthy relationships class for youth who identify as queer. They would reach out to us, and you know want a second start and so just their interest is exciting. And I'm really hoping that the government allows the students back on campus soon. I don't know but we are doing what we can, using the technology that we have and we hope to be starting some bystander intervention classes, this, this year, this coming year with the Tongue Point, students.

Meg: Yeah, I feel like that like the for-lack-of-better-word demand for for you all, the three of you on this call, and the broader organizations that you work with right is a real indicator of like the need, not just in Clatsop County but more broadly right that folks are begging for this kind of support in this kind of community is really amazing. I also think I'm curious how you will you mentioned earlier Jenny, I don't know if it was when we were recording or before that you all have done, been on the local radio and other things. And so you all are doing a lot of outreach work between the Instagrams and the local radio and other partnerships. And I'm curious if the ways in which you have done that has elevated the likelihood that folks might reach out to you. I don't know if any of you have any thoughts on that.

Jenny: I mean I hope so I think it's been a huge challenge, just COVID has made things so hard so I definitely feel that there there's a there's a key somewhere and maybe we're missing it right now. Like youth are not likely to email us say so it you know it's hard or they're, they're not as likely to call so I think like being able to be in person is, it's huge and it will be great when we can be doing that again. I mean after this next surge in cases, hopefully we can do more of that. But yeah, we're out there, we're trying again like I think just being able to zoom into classes is huge that they know we're there, that they know what kind of resources exist and that I mean the Start Talking Curriculum, I mean it's true it's just starting this conversation where Tongue Point has been great because we're zooming into so many classes and reaching, they're the most engaged youth. They're so so fun to work with, and they all just want to talk about this stuff like, they love it like, Oh, we can you know let's, let's talk about like what you know what a healthy relationship look like looks like and when is it okay for me to check my partner's phone and like they just all want this conversation. So I think it's so great just to get it started and you know the word will spread. It's definitely a challenge, the outreach part, but hopefully the word will spread.



## Exploring Prevention Audio Library Series 2, Episode 11

Julia: The teachers are often learning too. Um, I had one of the teachers ask me, and how do you intervene safely when you see some power based personal violence happening. That was really exciting to hear that you know the teacher ask. And, you know, the kids are hearing that as well. Oh. So it's this real movement, hoping it just takes off, I'm hoping that COVID is going to be gone.

Jenny: But I guess the good part too is that we're reaching, I mean being so rural, like we are reaching youth that we might not otherwise so like there's, there's the silver lining is like we're all learning these skills better I mean at Closet Cleaners with Ben like we do have youth from Washington who attend from you know very rural Washington across the river so they are able to find us you know if they're like 13, and they're not out to their parents, their parents not going to drive them to the Q Center to hang out so they can join us on zoom. And it just like telling them their rights to that's something that Julia and I do in the schools all the time like you know if the right to medical care of this say you know to access things on your own, you have the right to therapy, this is just kind of like getting stuff like that out there for health and violence prevention and I think is, it's huge to like, teach them their rights, basically, and all of the teachers have been super supportive and like, Oh, I didn't know that. Oh, that's really good information I can pass that along to whoever so we just try to like, spread the resources.

Julia: I um, Jenny and I received a little note, the teacher from Warrenton High School, who does the health class, who we absolutely love, but she was thanking us for coming in, and she was, she was like so appreciative of the work that we do at The Harbor and saying, like, the kids are reaching out to you, they won't reach out to me, they don't relate to me, and here I am like, I'm the same page and. And so it was nice to read this little note because you know she's like we need to have guest speakers come in we need to have different faces from different walks of life.

Meg: Is there anything else you all would like to share about the work you do, the programs, the different components of it? And/or if you're thinking about maybe some other communities in the state who might be looking to building these relationships and partnerships across organizations or implementing some, some strategies similar to this? Anything you want to share around any of those topics?

Jenny: Oh boy. I will say that, I've said this several times already, but I really do think that being able to get into the schools, just in a general kind of way and to talk about healthy relationships and if someone's looking to like, if they're in a really homophobic area, and they can have like a queer accompany someone, it is, it was, that's been huge I think. Just because then youth are approaching me and asking me about GSAs and it's just different than like, you know, we're not allowed to go into a school and start a GSA basically so I think that's like a really great strategy to get in there.

Julia: Jenny, can you tell us a little bit more about like, since we're not allowed to start a GSA and a teacher's not a lot of GSA like...

Jenny: Yeah, well at some schools that kind of depends some schools actually do let you do that but a lot of the more conservative schools or school boards have made rules that like clubs must be started by students, and they've done that to try to discourage you know like the queer mom or whoever from like coming in and starting a GSA. But as long as the school allows non-academic clubs, they legally also have





## Exploring Prevention Audio Library Series 2, Episode 11

to allow GSAs, to exist to be started. So just direct us to the website [glsen.org](http://glsen.org) that has like all of the information on how to start a GSA and activities to do and all kinds of cool stuff.

Meg: That's awesome. Any other last little thoughts about the work?

Julia: Just lastly, we are going to be advertising for submissions from youth, for our literary magazine. Our literary art magazine. We're hoping that it'll continue like to be called Forget the Fairytale. We're not sure just yet but um, Jenny is also going to be doing a side project, for your, do you want to talk about that Jenny?

Jenny: For my master's thesis, my group is working on like a guerilla project for youth, like a sex ed. zine that you will create and can distribute, but it'll be, Julia's will be a little more polished.

Meg: I love that you all are really, you know, keeping youth at the center. And, you know, leaving and making sure that their voices are the lead in all of this work. Thank you all so much for your time today. I really appreciate you all and the work you are doing.

Jenny: Thanks for having us. It's fun to talk about and like remember what, oh yeah, we're doing a lot.

Julia: Thanks Meg for everything.