

Transformational is the definition of Queer Academy.

S* came into Queer Academy that first day, with her head down, hair in her eyes and covering her face and speaking in a nearly inaudible voice. Six weeks later, she was on stage at “Draguation” singing a Capella. T* started the program as an angry young lesbian struggling on a daily basis with unsupportive group home staff. He left as a confident young trans man who performed his own spoken word piece to a standing ovation that included some members of that same group home staff.



For some folks, summer days are for lazy afternoons, vacations and taking life a little slower. The summer at True Colors is as busy – or busier – than other times of the year. Our main event is Queer Academy – a six week intensive summer youth program designed to develop LGBTQ youth personally, professionally and academically.

This year’s theme was “Standing at the Intersections of You and Me.” Youth explored the elements of their own identity – beginning to see themselves and each other as intersectional beings. Some recognized for the first time the ways in which one element of their identity (queerness) impacted other elements of their identity (race, ethnicity, family structure, etc.)



They explored their identities through experiential activities, research projects, discussions, films and field trips. They went to Northampton to learn about the ‘queerer’ side of Emily Dickinson at the museum dedicated to her. They visited the Stonewall Bar and learned about the beginning of the LGBTQ rights movement in a way that was inclusive of transgender youth of color who helped launch the riots. They spent time at UCONN learning how to use the library and exploring the cultural centers.



They ‘operationalized’ their thoughts with art, spoken word, research posters and through a “presentation of learning” where they described their experiences and what they learned to people from the community – donors like you, legislators, family members, clinicians, and even group home staff.

It was transformational. **And YOU made it possible.** Queer Academy has no direct funding source except people like you who donate \$5.00, \$50.00, \$500.00 and in one case, even \$5,000. YOU change lives. And, we are so grateful.