

Our First 5 Years
2020 – 2025

THE BUCKEYE FLAME

IMPACT REPORT

From Spark to Bonfire, Igniting our Future.



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.

Ken
Schneck
Editor



We could not be more, yes, **fired up** to bring you this inaugural impact report.

The Buckeye Flame launched in June of 2020 as a 501c3 nonprofit newsroom, filling the lack of a statewide LGBTQ+ newsroom in Ohio. Here in a state where LGBTQ+ Ohioans do not have any protections in the areas of housing, employment and public accommodations – and where the Ohio Legislature is constantly working overtime to restrict the lived experience of LGBTQ+ Ohioans – the need for an LGBTQ+ newsroom could not be more critical.

From Day One, we have centered on “igniting action”: We not only want people to engage with our content, but also to **do** something with the words we publish.

We invite you to read through this report to learn more about how we shine a light on the lives of LGBTQ+ Ohioans, (symbolically!) burn down the systems that neither serve nor represent us and provide a much-needed spark to ignite the change needed to create the lived equality we both need and deserve. 🔥

Metrics

1.9 million +
Visits since 2020

1.6 million +
Users since 2020

12,000 + 52%
Newsletter subscriptions Newsletter open rate

1,325+
STORIES

From an explainer of a bill forcing teachers to out LGBTQ+ students, to a story about queer death doulas, to the profile of Ohio's only mac-and-cheese drag food truck, our intersectional content covers an ever-evolving range of topics to meet the needs of our readers.



NEWS PARTNERS

The Buckeye Flame has worked with **over three dozen** local, state and national newsrooms that have amplified our content, including:

 **USA TODAY**

OHIO CAPITAL JOURNAL

ADVOCATE

CityBeat

The New York Times

 **The Marshall Project**

THE **19th**

LA **MEGANOTA**



13,200 +



8,700 +



5,900 +

Story Impact

Our stories don't just share information, they ignite action and affect change. This is merely a snapshot — a few of many stories that have made an impact on LGBTQ+ Ohio.



We are committed to telling stories of LGBTQ+ Ohioans, using their **voices to make a difference** — and the stories themselves have made a difference. An article on a free trans voice clinic resulted in the clinic **tripling enrollment**. A profile of an LGBTQ+ clothing resale shop led to **truckfuls of donations arriving at the shop's door**. And a piece on a critical LGBTQ+ Ohio asset-mapping project led to **a deluge of responses** and the **overwhelming gratitude** of the researchers.



We committed to increasing **legislative literacy**: bridging the gap between LGBTQ+ Ohioans and the bills that affect their lived experience. We have **covered hundreds of hearings**, and our **annual legislative guide** is one of our most viewed pages of the year. Our articles are **regularly cited in testimony** for LGBTQ+ bills and have even been **named in the introduction to pro-LGBTQ+ legislation**. Our readers let us know weekly that they use **our “Ignite Action” bullet points to contact elected officials** to make sure their voices are heard by those who represent them.



Queer joy abounds in Ohio and we are here to amplify it. A story on Ohio's only drag mac-and-cheese food truck **resulted in a gooey heaping of new bookings**, a piece on an incubator for LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs inspired in **a slew of new applications** and healthcare providers regularly tell us that new clients say **our coverage inspired them to make a first appointment** to ensure their joy is tied to their wellness. And our Ohio LGBTQ+ Pride Guide, an annual offering listing hundreds of celebrations across Ohio, **has singlehandedly increased Pride-goers across the state for years**.

Reader Feedback ↘

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“We consider the Flame to be an integral part of the LGBTQ+ community. Keep up the great work! We'll keep donating no matter what the benefits are.”

“The Buckeye Flame is my go-to source for all things related to LGBTQ+ people, events and issues in Ohio. Their stories are comprehensive, thought-provoking and informative. Thank you for keeping us informed.”

“Thanks for covering the political scene in Columbus . Since we have few substantial newspapers in Ohio, this is my best source for keeping up with the legislature here in Ohio. Thanks for all your coverage of supportive groups and businesses — especially new venues that I can support!”



“The Buckeye Flame covers LGBTQ-related stories in a way that no ‘big box’ news will make it relatable and easier to understand.”

“There's no other publication like The Buckeye Flame, and it's such an asset. I really appreciate the digestible insights The Buckeye Flame provides about legal proceedings and what's happening in Ohio legislation that affects the LGBTQ community. Certainly a time when we all need to be paying close attention. Thank you!”

Awards & Recognition

Recognition for our work has included:



- **New York Times: “Local Journalism Worth Reading”**
- **Sarah Pettit Memorial Award for the National LGBTQ Journalist of the Year** (2021 and 2024)
- **GLAAD Media Awards**
 - Outstanding Independent Journalism (2025 nomination)
 - Outstanding Online Journalism Article (2025 nomination)
- **Local Media Association Digital Innovation Award** (2025)
- **Ohio Society of Professional Journalists:**
 - First Place “Best Medical/Science/Health Care Reporting” (2024)
 - First Place “Specialized Journalism Site” (2021)
 - First Place “Best Criticism/Editorial” (2020)
 - Second Place in “Best Explanatory Journalism” (2021)
 - Second Place in the “Best Social Issues Reporting” (2021)
- **Ohio Press Club Awards**
 - First, Second and Third Place – “Best Headline Writing” (2023)
 - Third Place All of Ohio – “Best Headline Writing” (2024)

Memberships & Affiliations



Staff

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Ken Schneck (he/him), Editor



Ken Schneck is the Editor of The Buckeye Flame, a role he has held since he created the newsroom in 2020. For this work, he received the 2021 Sarah Pettit Memorial Award for the LGBTQ Journalist of the Year from the Association of LGBTQ+ Journalists.

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



H.L. Comeriato is an award-winning multimedia journalist living and working in Ohio. They received the 2024 Sarah Pettit Memorial Award for the LGBTQ Journalist of the Year from the Association of LGBTQ+ Journalists.

Ben Jodway (he/him), Report for America Corps Member / Rural LGBTQ+ Beat



Ben Jodway is a staff writer for The Buckeye Flame covering the LGBTQ+ community in rural Ohio via Report for America. Ben stands as the only known “Rural LGBTQ+” beat reporter in any newsroom in the world.

Anna Malefatto (she/her), Development Director



Anna Malefatto (she/her) joined The Buckeye Flame as the newsroom’s first Development Director in June 2025. She has spent nearly 15 years working in nonprofit fundraising and communications, with a focus on reproductive health, rights and justice.

Laura Putre (she/her), Copy Editor



Laura Putre (she/her) is a National Press Foundation fellow and multiple recipient of Ohio SPJ, Cleveland Press Club and Folio awards. She is senior editor at IndustryWeek, and she was a co-founder of Belt Magazine, editor of the Chicago Journal and staff writer for Cleveland Scene.

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