

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MEDIA RELEASE

KINGSTON OFFICE SPACE FOR LESBIAN AND GAY COMMUNITY GROUP VANDALIZED DURING WEEKEND

MAYOR SOTTILE EXPRESSES SHOCK AND PLEDGES RENEWED COMMITMENT TO ESTABLISHMENT OF HUDSON VALLEY LGBTQ COMMUNITY CENTER

KINGSTON, NY -- Unknown person or persons vandalized an office space in Kingston last weekend, causing extensive damage to the facilities. The office space on Hurley Avenue is the temporary office space for the proposed Hudson Valley LGBTQ Community Center.

(LGBTQ refers to the sexual orientation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer or questioning individuals.)

Virginia Apuzzo, President of the Board of Directors for the Center, discovered the damage on the morning of Sunday, May 7. The office space had been inhabited for only a week. The address of the temporary office space was announced publicly only three days previous, in an article appearing in the May 4th edition of The Kingston Times.

"When violence occurs to a workspace for LGBTQ people, it sends a message of bigotry and hatred meant for our entire community," Apuzzo said. "This cowardly act underscores the need for an LGBTQ Community Center and reinforces our determination to open one here in Kingston."

During a meeting with Apuzzo on Tuesday, Mayor James Sottile expressed his shock that a bias crime occurred in Kingston and pledged his renewed commitment to the establishment of an LGBTQ Community Center in Kingston.

"It is appalling to me that, in this day and age, there are still people, cowards actually, who refuse to accept the rights of all people and use violence and vandalism as tools of intimidation," said Mayor James Sottile

this afternoon in a prepared statement. "It will not work here in the City of Kingston. I will not tolerate any type of violence against any group at any level.

"The Kingston community has proven time and time again that we are accepting and respectful of all," Mayor Sottile continued. "The biased acts of the ignorant few cannot overcome the strength and compassion expressed by our community as a whole. The City of Kingston will continue to work with the Board of Directors of the Hudson Valley LGBTQ Community Center. This senseless act of vandalism will not diminish my commitment to this important project."

Mayor Sottile met earlier this year with members of the Community Center Steering Committee in February and confirmed his support for the proposed center. In a prepared statement made in March, Mayor Sottile said: "The City of Kingston has always been ready to help all groups in our community. ... I look forward to working with the Center Steering Committee in this valuable project, recognizing that the gay and lesbian community is not a fringe group, but a legitimate section of society and should be treated with the same respect and dignity that we all deserve."

The Hudson Valley LGBTQ Community Center would provide social services, counseling, and cultural programs for all citizens of the region. Its proposal to offer social services is particularly important, since gays and lesbians are underserved by the current infrastructure which overlooks their special concerns, whether they are teens or senior citizens. County schools offer no gay and lesbian history courses nor support for teens who face verbal harassment and physical abuse for their sexual orientation. Nationally, gay and lesbian teens suffer higher levels of depression than their straight counterparts and are twice as likely to commit suicide because of homophobic treatment. A Community Center would address ongoing persecution and inequity towards all members of the LGBTQ community of the Hudson Valley.

ATTENTION MEDIA: For an interview with Center Board President Virginia Apuzzo on the recent vandalism, please call Jay Blotcher at (845) 687-2284.