

Modeling Parent Leadership for Our Kids

An Interview with Kelly Shira

Kelly Shira is an attorney working in compliance, policy, and diversity issues at Google. Her family lives in the South Bay, and has marched in the Our Family Coalition contingent at SF Pride since their daughter was a year old.



OUR FAMILY COALITION:

First off, can you tell us a bit about your family?

KELLY SHIRA: Our family is my wife Nicole, and my daughter Clementine, who's six, and me. My wife and I met in Phoenix, AZ in 2006. We had been dating for about a year. We didn't know anybody who was married or making long-term commitments to each other.

One morning we were out to brunch talking about kids. She

knew I really wanted them, and she did, too. We were already having that discussion. On the drive home, I looked at her and said, "We can do this. We can get married and have a wedding."

She looked at me and said, "Was that a proposal?" And I was like, "Well, yeah. I think it was!"

It was really wonderful. We were the first of our friends to do this—gay or straight—to make a commitment like this to each other. But we were going to do this. Even in conservative Arizona.

OFC: How soon after the engagement did you know you wanted to start a family?

KS: We moved to the Bay Area a year after we got married, and right away began looking into starting a family. We started looking into assisted reproduction, but the whole experience was complicated and painful. That's one of the reasons I'm so glad I know now that OFC is around. I didn't know about

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The Value of Giving Is Multigenerational

An Interview with Martin Mitchell

Martin Mitchell works as an administrator in the Oakland Unified School District, and has served as a member of Our Family Coalition's Board of Directors for years. He's also Treasurer and a Deacon at City of Refuge UCC Church.

OUR FAMILY COALITION: Tell us a bit about your family: anything you'd like to share about how you came to be?

MARTIN MITCHELL: Bob and I have two adopted sons, one 16 and the other 24. We've been together for 18 years and legally married for five. Both our sons were adopted as teenagers, which is a bit unusual—but there's a huge need in that area.

OFC: Has your notion of community uplift changed since you became a parent, and if so, how?

MM: No, it hasn't. I've just had to learn how to plan better! (laughs)

I've always been involved with the community. I'm almost 60, and I worked on my first political campaign when I was 16 years old! Throughout my life I've always been involved, whether it's with some organization, mentoring young men,

or tutoring kids—it's how I was raised. You give back to the community when you can.

So when I had children, I didn't want to give that up. I just had to be sure that what I was involved with did not take time away from my family, and instead ideally include them.

OFC: What kinds of community volunteer work do you engage in now that has been family-friendly, and why?

MM: We've found the kids can easily be involved with us at church. For years, Bob was involved with the church food pantry. Our youngest son James would go with him twice a month. They would get there about 5:00AM, set it up, and then end up staying until it closed. It was how he got James involved. And it stuck.



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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

We Can't Do It Without You

by Renata Moreira, Executive Director



Late this past fall, I began calling on our supporters for our end-of-year fundraising campaign. It's one of the best parts of my job—the opportunity to reconnect with our community one-on-one. But I was moved to tears during a conversation with a solo mom who attends every playgroup she can. She explained, “OFC has been crucial to my mental health. It has provided so much support—I have no other space like this in my life as a queer woman of color. I will donate what I can. Because I know it is extremely important to keep spaces for this doubly marginalized community. It's life-saving work, really.” I couldn't agree more.

Each call enables me to connect with passionate LGBTQ parents like this mom: parents who are not only committed to ensuring the well-being of their children, but also the well-being of all of us; folks who are seeking to generously share their time, talent, and resources so that Our Family Coalition can keep providing high quality programming (always accompanied by free, culturally competent childcare!) and inclusive schools trainings to educators across the state. All the while advocating on behalf of our families in Sacramento and beyond.

Oftentimes, LGBTQ individuals and couples come to OFC prior to entering their journey as parents. Here they find a brave, non-judgmental space where remarkable professionals with years of experience and resources can support them on their family formation journeys. Or, once they join the ranks of sleep-deprived parents and caregivers, they find themselves in need or desire to form community in ways that they may not have needed before.

I had a conversation with a dad recently. “The support I received at OFC events filled a void left by my biological family, who never believed I'd be a good parent due to my sexual orientation.” He went on to clarify: “It's a non-issue for my kids, but that's only because they can see that there are other families with gay dads like me.”

Community members sharing from the heart like this inspires me to keep leading our collective work in an authentic way, to keep working to inspire our incredible team to ensure LGBTQ families of ALL backgrounds are seen, supported, and protected. I know, in my Brazilian-American heart, that our families and allies are unstoppable agents for transformation—given the conditions that enable shifts in awareness, the release of old wounds, and the miracles that happen when we work together towards a common goal.

Yet the truth is, **we can't take OFC for granted.** The midterm elections provided us some hope, but we have an enormous amount of work to do to counter the damage of the past two years. And if they've taught us anything, it's that the complacency of the compassionate allows its opposite to flourish.

Co-creating a world that is based on interrelated community is not an easy feat. So another big part of my role as OFC's ED is to continuously invite you, our beloved community, to help us ensure the sustainability and the long-term financial health of this important, life-affirming, transformative work. We can sustain this organization and ensure a future where your child and mine can thrive—but only if we do it together. **Please donate what you can today at ourfamily.org/give-back.**

Every dollar makes change happen: \$25 buys fruit and snacks for kids at a playgroup; \$50 pays for childcare at a workshop; \$100 allows us to boost our press releases out to the right national audience; \$500 pays for LGBTQ-inclusive training for ten teachers.

Looking forward, my 2019 wishes for all of us are that we continue co-creating a world where our families and allies can feel seen and valued. May we all create together a world in which we know someone will be there, to have our back, when we need the support. 🌱

Modeling Parent Leadership...

(continued from page 1)

OFC at the time. We felt like we didn't have any resources as a same-sex couple.

Other than a few classes we took, throughout our whole trying to conceive process, we got shunted down the path of "infertility." I was made to feel like I had a fertility problem, when actually we had a sperm problem.

OFC: How long was the journey from actively trying to conceive to Clementine's birth?

KS: It took about fifteen months, which is not very long in the grand scheme of things, but to me it felt like an eternity. They had me on fertility drugs; I was having reactions to them. It was a really rocky time, and I felt like there wasn't anybody else going through what I was going through. That's one of the reasons I love your organization so much. It's fulfilling a need.

We finally found a support group for queer couples. After listening to one couple in the group who had some really good advice, that's when we finally got pregnant. I have always thought back on that. That after listening to what those two women said, that's when it actually happened.

OFC: Has your notion of community uplift changed since you became a parent, and if so, how?

KS: One of the reasons I do volunteer work, and why I think really hard about the things I do, is because of her. Because of the world that I want her to be in. We had to work so hard to bring her into this world. And I want it to be a really good place for her. That's one of the reasons we take her to Pride: we want to show her what is out there. That the family she's a part of is part of something bigger.

OFC: What kinds of community volunteer work do you engage in now, and why?

KS: I volunteer mostly through my daughter's school, and also through work. That's due to time commitments, but also to be intentional, to be a role model in places that matter. I

*"This is what we do. We help out.
We give back."*

am involved in mostly LGBTQ causes and the environment. This year, I felt it was important to be an election officer in my precinct, to make sure people were able to vote. It was honestly one of the most fulfilling experiences I've ever had.

As volunteers, you are so close to the democratic process, and that's how it should be. Our democracy should be run by the people in it. On election day, I spent hours being the first person you interface with and learned a lot. I was so surprised at how quickly people would give up and turn to leave when I was having trouble finding them on the list. I was all, "Wait, I might have just missed your name!" Or "Here, we can give you a provisional ballot!"

It really makes a big difference who is working at the polls.

OFC: How do you manage it all as a working parent?

KS: This one is hard. I don't really have this figured out. I really wish I had more time to give back to the community. I don't really feel like I have enough time, period, to do anything. The one thing I've found though, as I've gotten older, and have gotten further in my career, is that even if I feel I don't have enough time to give, I can give back financially.

OFC: And when you can give time, what are the issues you care most about, now that you're a parent?

KS: I don't think that much has changed. At the core, I think it's stayed the same, aligned in the same areas: community, families, and the natural environment. Now that she has gotten a little bit older, I try to bring her along with me. For example, at the polling place, I brought her along with me when I had to set up the night before. I want her to be seeing it, to pitch in. And to know that this is what we do. We help out. We give back. ↻

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MON Jan 12, 19, 26 3-5pm	<i>Baby & Me Ballet Series (0-5 years)</i> DESTINY ARTS CENTER, 970 GRACE AVE., OAKLAND Join OFC and Teacher Mekeba in this 3-part series of fun, dance class for children 0-5 years old and their accompanying adult(s). Spin, dance, and leap with engaging songs and activities that help us connect with the little ones in our lives as well as our own inner little ones.	EB
SUN Jan 6 2:30-5pm	<i>Ice Skating</i> YERBA BUENA ICE SKATING AND BOWLING CENTER, 750 FOLSOM ST., SAN FRANCISCO Do you love ice skating, or have you always wanted to learn how? This skating party is for novices and experts alike. Join us and other LGBTQ+ families at San Francisco's favorite year-round facility at Yerba Buena. There will be a special tot area for our littlest skaters. Space is limited so RSVP now!	SF
SAT & SUN Jan 12 & 13 9am-6pm	<i>Surrogacy Conference and Expo</i> MARINES' MEMORIAL CLUB & HOTEL, 609 SUTTER ST., SAN FRANCISCO In partnership with Men Having Babies: an educational conference for gay men who want to become parents through surrogacy, featuring in-depth panels on insurance, budgeting, medical and emotional issues to consider, and a broad range of domestic and international parenting options.	SF
THU Jan 17 6-8pm	<i>Teen & Tween Psychology: It's Not Just Hormones</i> OUR FAMILY COALITION, 1385 MISSION ST., STE 340, SAN FRANCISCO Twins and teens have notorious emotional ups and downs, but what's really going on beneath the surface? How can parents best navigate through the rebellion and drama and maintain healthy relationships with their teens? Answer these questions and more, in this eye-opening session on youth brain development with Dawn Stueckle, ED of Sunset Youth Services.	SF
THU Jan 31 Feb 7, 21, 28 Mar 7, 14, 21, 28 6-8pm	<i>Positive Parenting Program: Teen Series</i> OUR FAMILY COALITION OFFICE, 1385 MISSION ST., STE 340, SAN FRANCISCO Dawn Stueckle, ED of Sunset Youth Services, will lead LGBTQ+ parents and caregivers of youth aged 11-17 years through the 12-session teen-tested curriculum of the Positive Parenting Program. Gain insights about supporting tweens/teens through adolescence and learn ways to strengthen your relationship.	SF
TUE Feb 12 6-8pm	<i>Learn It, Do It Yourself! Domestic & Second-Parent Adoption</i> OUR FAMILY COALITION OFFICE, 1385 MISSION ST., STE 340, SAN FRANCISCO Do you have questions about the new adoption procedures, or about the differences between step-parent and second-parent adoption? At this hands-on workshop, Deborah Wald, an attorney with decades of experience working with LGBTQ families, will describe current adoption rules and procedures, answer your questions, and then help you prepare adoption paperwork.	SF
WED Feb 20 6-8pm	<i>Mission Possible: Understanding the Tween & Teen Mind</i> DESTINY ARTS CENTER, 970 GRACE AVE., OAKLAND Too much drama, too much time on electronic devices, and too little interaction with parents. Sound familiar? What causes the emotional ups and downs? Can we use insight about their challenges to support them better, and connect with them more effectively? Answer these questions and more, in this eye-opening session with Jessie Rose Cohen, LCSW, a Bay Area child and family therapist—and queer parent.	EB
SAT Feb 23 10am-1pm	<i>Trans Family Field Trip to Lawrence Hall of Science</i> 1 CENTENNIAL DR., BERKELEY Discover and experience with OFC on our Trans Family Field Trip to Lawrence Hall of Science. Come with your little ones to explore the exhibits and enjoy the 3D film or Planetarium the Hall has in store for us. As space is limited, we will not be able to accommodate walk-ins. Register now to save your spot!	EB
SUN Mar 3, 17, 31 10am-12pm	<i>Gender/Play Series for Parents and Kids</i> DESTINY ARTS CENTER, 970 GRACE AVE., OAKLAND OFC, Destiny Arts Center and trainer Gabriel Christian (they/them) come together to bring you a series of parent-child interactive classes to help little ones and their adults think through the cycles of gendered language that perpetuate inequity and misunderstanding. Utilizing physical exercises, fun activities, and yes, a costume box, we will wiggle out of our usual frameworks to find new ways to gender ourselves.	EB

SUN Mar 3 1–4pm	Trans Family Event LOCATION TBD Save the date for a fun family event for trans, gender non-conforming and non-binary parents and kids and their families!	SF
SAT Mar 9 5–8:30pm	LGBTQ+ Family Night @Downtown Berkeley YMCA YMCA, 2001 ALLSTON WAY, BERKELEY Join OFC for our signature event LGBTQ Family Night at the Berkeley YMCA! Swimming for all ages, kindergym, raffle, activities for older children, sports, arts and crafts, and loads of entertainment.	EB
WED Mar 13 6:30–8pm	Meet the Queer-Friendly Doula NATURAL RESOURCES, 1367 VALENCIA ST., SAN FRANCISCO Looking for a birth or postpartum doula experienced in serving LGBTQ+ families? Want to learn how a doula can support your family? Come meet some incredible professionals ready to share their expertise on various stages of the childbirth journey.	SF

SUPPORT GROUPS

WEDNESDAYS Feb 5 Mar 6 5:30–7:30pm	Rainbow Family Night HABITOT CHILDREN'S MUSEUM, 2065 KITTREDGE ST., BERKELEY LGBTQ parents are invited to join our facilitated support group to connect, share experiences, swap tips, and discuss issues relevant to our families, while kids have a great time playing at Habitot.	EB
WEDNESDAYS Jan 9, 16, 23, 30; Feb 6, 13, 20, 27 6–8pm	GBTQ Dads Support Group OUR FAMILY COALITION OFFICE, 1385 MISSION ST., STE 340, SAN FRANCISCO OFC's 8-week peer support group for GBTQ men with kids in San Francisco is a queer/trans-affirming space to connect with other dads, discuss parenting strategies, and share resources.	SF
TUESDAYS Jan 22 Feb 26 Mar 26 6–8pm	Drop-In Support for LGBTQ+ Parents CHILDREN'S DAY SCHOOL, 333 DOLORES ST., SAN FRANCISCO Enjoy a meal with your kids and other LGBTQ+ families, then parents and caregivers break off for facilitated discussions with their peers about family and child-rearing issues. Dinner and childcare provided with advance registration.	SF

PLAYGROUPS

FRIDAYS Jan 4, 11, 18, 25; Feb 1, 8, 15, 22; Mar 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 9–10:30am	Toddle with Me (1–5 years) RECESS COLLECTIVE, 2226 TARAVAL ST., SAN FRANCISCO Offered weekly for LGBTQ parents with young children, our music and movement classes promote kids' overall development. Using creative physical expression, this class promotes gross and fine motor skill development, coordination and balance, as well as early literacy, pre-math, and social-emotional skills.	SF
TUESDAYS Jan 8, 15, 22, 29; Feb 5, 12, 19, 26; Mar 5, 12, 19, 26 10–11:30am	LGBTQ Parent-Child Interactive Playgroup (0–5 years) DESTINY ARTS, 970 GRACE AVE., OAKLAND Interactive play and circle time for infants, toddlers, and their grown ups, including fun activities like music, movement, and storytelling. Healthy snacks provided!	EB
MONDAYS Mar 4, 11, 18, 25; Apr 8, 15, 22, 29 10:30am–12pm	Baby & Me: Infant Class (0–12 months) COMMUNITY WELL, 78 OCEAN AVE., SAN FRANCISCO Want more quality time with your little one? OFC will be hosting an 8-week infant class for LGBTQ+ parents and caregivers. This parent-child interactive helps support child bonding and health and increases know-how about your infant's cognitive, physical, and language development!	SF

*Free childcare and food are provided at all events, with advance registration.
For further information and event registration, visit www.ourfamily.org.*

2018 Impact: in Numbers



our family
coalition

Advancing equity for LGBTQ families
through support, education and advocacy.

262
events

We provided direct service to our families at over **262 events** this year, including parent education workshops, support groups, community-building events, and parent + child interactive playgroups.



3,800
people

We brought together more than **3,800 people** – LGBTQ family members and friends, from the Bay Area and beyond – to attend our family support and educational programming.

We collaborated with more than **37 community-based and advocacy organizations** on high-impact family justice campaigns locally and statewide.

37
organizational
partners

We welcomed over **2,171 guests** to our LGBTQ Pride Family Gardens in San Francisco and Oakland, making them the largest annual gathering of LGBTQ families & our allies in each city.

733
trainees

We trained **733 educators and family members** in anti-bias and family and gender-diversity topics, including: *The LGBTQ-Inclusive Classroom*, *Gender 101*, *Anti-Bias for Early Childhood*, *Inclusive Sex and Puberty Education*, and *Supporting Trans and Gender Nonconforming Students and Families*.

We hosted the **first-ever LGBTQ-inclusive ed training forum** – the *Make History: Teach LGBTQ History Forum* – convening California's top educators to plan training and support for our K-12 teachers as they deliver California's historic LGBTQ-inclusive history and social sciences curriculum.

2,171
Pride Garden
guests

1st
LGBTQ- inclusive
ed training
forum

Our Family Coalition is built on reciprocity. Please join us and give back at OurFamily.org



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supporting equity for all
families and children

The Value of Giving ...

(continued from page 1)

OFC: Do you see your

sons showing you new directions in community involvement?

MM: Both Bob and I come from families that were very involved where we grew up. Now that we're parents, we know our children will eventually emulate what they grew up with. Since our parents instilled in us a sense of service, we're hoping we can instill the same in our sons. The value of giving is multi-generational.

Lawrence, our oldest, is a court advocate. He works with young people who are in the juvenile justice system and are out on parole or waiting for their court cases. Helping others is a critical part of a career, for him. It's just part of his personality.

James is the same way. When he first came to live with us, we used to talk a lot about helping others. But we saw that he already had that value in him; helping just came naturally. When he was in middle school, we always told him, "Don't fight. Just walk away." But the fights he got into were when he was protecting other kids who were being bullied. He's very caring. Even when Bob couldn't go to the pantry, James would make arrangements to have someone pick him up so he could still go.

OFC: How do you manage a life of service as a working parent?

MM: Whatever you engage in has to be something you're going to enjoy. There are hundreds of organizations that need volunteers. Find organizations that your children can get involved in as well, so they can go with you, and at least from time to time, get involved.

If you have a busy work life, your kids have sports and

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school, you just have to set a time aside and say, "As a family, we're going to do this once a month." If you can get the entire family involved, it works. And if not, as an individual you start that example, and maybe everyone else will follow.

OFC: Anything else you'd like to share?

MM: It's a gift to be able to give back. And it teaches your kids to respect individuals who are less fortunate than they are. It's just the luck of the draw. Any of us can be in that place at any time in our lives. You have to help others because there may be times when you're going to need help. Life has a way of showing up at your front door when you don't expect it! 🙌

Foster Adoption Mini Conference

Another year of information sharing, panel discussions, and agency meet and greet for LGBTQ families exploring foster-adoption. What a magnificent turn-out! We hope to see you all again next year!

DEC

9





KMS is spearheading a progressive curriculum where art, music, dance, Spanish language, outdoor education, and creative writing are core to an academic program that is project based and specific to each of our learners taking inspiration from Mel Levine, Slingerland, Reggio Emilia Project Based Learning, and similar techniques. In addition to full time students, we welcome part time.

Open Mind Elementary:

- TK through 5th Grade
- [Enrichment Classes](#) (after school)
- [Summer Camps](#)

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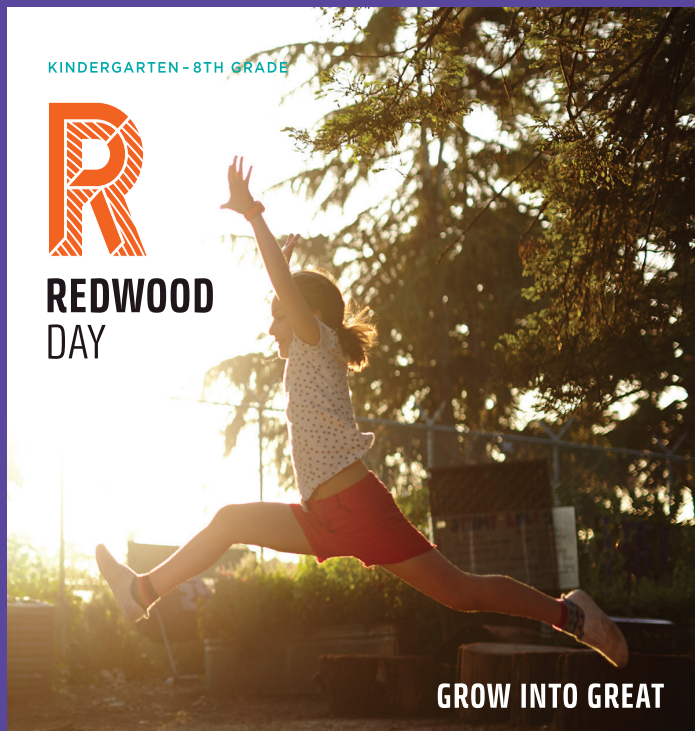
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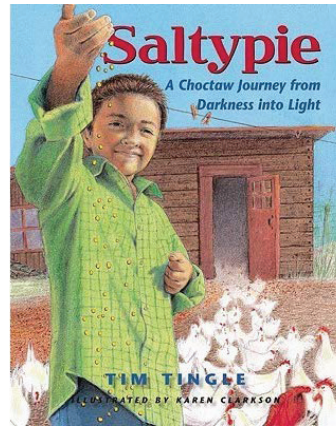
To RSVP, or for more information, contact Yvette Bonaparte,
Director of Admissions, at 415-565-0400 or
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BOOK CORNER

Saltypie: A Choctaw Journey from Darkness Into Light

By Tim Tingle • Illustrated by Karen Clarkson

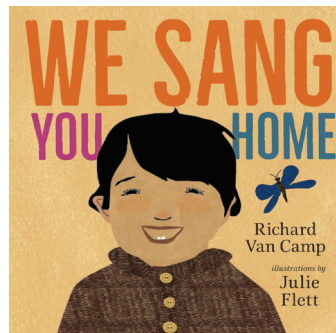
In this powerful family saga, author Tim Tingle tells the story of his family's move from Oklahoma Choctaw country to Pasadena, Tex. Spanning 50 years, *Saltypie* describes the problems encountered by his Choctaw grandmother—from her orphan days at an Indian boarding school to hardships encountered in her new home on the Gulf Coast. Ages 6-10



We Sang You Home

By Richard Van Camp • Illustrated by Julie Flett

In this sweet and lyrical board book from the creators of the bestselling *Little You*, gentle rhythmic text captures the wonder new parents feel as they welcome baby into the world. A celebration of the bond between parent and child, this is the perfect song to share with your little ones. Ages 0–5.



Our Family Coalition advances equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) families with children through support, education, and advocacy.

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