

## Hazel eyes bright future for LGBTQ community <sup>[1]</sup>



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Kat Hazel

When Kat Hazel stepped into her role as educational trainer and event coordinator at the LGBTQ Resource Center <sup>[3]</sup>, her enthusiasm, spirit and innovative ideas quickly shone through. In the few months she has been there, she has seen many of them get underway, and the community has been grateful.

"I came into the position knowing that I wanted to try to make a positive impact on anyone I met. I brought an idea to my boss, Steve [Willich], about getting more people of color in our office. We already had our QTPOC (Queer and Trans People of Color) group, but still, I wanted to explore more opportunities to get more involved," she said. Hazel's idea was to bridge the gap between Undocuqueers and the center for people coming from different walks of life who identify in the LGBTQ community.

"Coming from a different country is hard enough. Identifying in the LGBTQ community and moving to a different place can make that experience so much harder," she said. "I am working with The Office of Identity and Inclusion to hopefully get an 'Undocuqueers' program set up."

Hazel, a biology (pre-dentistry) major with a minor in political science, gives trainings to offices and students to discuss LGBTQ related rights and facts. She also participates in the LGBTQ+ Connections program, where LGBTQ students are matched with a staff member for mentorship of sorts. She contributes to the Social Lounge Space that was opened for out LGBTQ People of Color. Her team also offers a virtual monthly Netflix party and has a GroupMe chat set up for QTPOC to freely chat when they're not able to make social space.

"As a woman of color, it is hard to be blind to everything going on in our country regarding race and sexual identity," she said. "Being a part of something bigger than myself like this is what drives my desire for my political science minor."

When COVID-19 struck, Hazel and her team were quick to ensure no students felt isolated. "I have a solid relationship with my students, and it has been just as beneficial for me as it has for them during these harder times," she said. "When COVID happened, we were asked to come up with ideas to keep people engaged. An idea I had was a weekly game night that I renamed 'GAYme Night.' We host this every other Friday night between 3 and 5 p.m."



ed, straight environment and being the minority has  
; what inspires her the most.

Kat Hazel's grandmother is one of her greatest inspirations

"Growing up in a very Catholic home I expected to be disowned by my family when I came out," said Hazel, who plans to graduate in 2022. "My grandma was nothing but supportive and encourages me and tells me often how proud of me she is for fighting for equal and civil rights for everyone."

Hazel hopes that all people can take that as an example. "One of the biggest ways to start fulfilling this need would be to just be respectful even if you do not agree. Realizing that your identities are not always a choice."

Known for her optimism and bright outlook, Hazel believes this year's Virtual Pride Parade might offer some positive, lasting impacts as the pride movement continues. "I am excited to see how it plays out this year," Hazel said. "I think that being able to virtually join might be a bit more personable because there will not be tons of activity and distracting situations. Some close friends and I are also planning a pride celebration at home."

She strongly believes that Pride can and should be celebrated throughout the year, and as with her role with the LGBTQ Resource Center, she has some ideas on how to make it happen.

"Our communities can continue to be affirming all year long by businesses continuing to keep their pride flags out to let us know they are accepting; parents can continue to talk about and be proud of their LGBTQ identifying child; laws and policies in favor of the LGBTQ community; and civil rights can continue to be passed and the hate crimes and discrimination can continue to be recognized and brought to light and be stopped," Hazel said. "Bystander intervention is one of the trainings our office provides, and can be very beneficial to continue to support our community."



**Groups audience:**

CU Pride

**Sub Title:**

CU Denver student's initiatives have immediate impact

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