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## Illinois State Fairgoers Welcome First LGBT Booth

SPRINGFIELD, ILL.--Thousands of people from all over Illinois are learning about LGBT equality at the Illinois State Fair this month, thanks to the first-ever LGBT booth sponsored by Equality Illinois and Lambda Legal.

The State Fair is a crossroads of the state, where every nook and cranny of Illinois is represented. Whether folks just stroll by on their way to the giant butter cow or Ethnic Village or stop in to say hello, the booth is carrying the message of equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people far and wide.

“We are getting a tremendous response from fairgoers,” said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois. “Just the fact that our booth is present and visible is significant. On top of that, we are promoting marriage equality and getting hundreds of ‘I Do’ postcards signed each day that will be sent to state lawmakers in support of the legislation.”



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*Equality Illinois' Joey McDonald (on left) works with a volunteer at the Illinois State Fair to help fairgoers sign "I Do" postcards in support of marriage equality.*

The booth is also energizing for scores of volunteers from Springfield and surrounding communities who are staffing it for the 11-day run of the fair, which ends Sunday (Aug. 19).

Many of the LGBT fairgoers are excited to see themselves represented for the first time at the annual event. Other fairgoers care about fairness issues. For still others, it may be their first exposure to LGBT equality in such a major public

forum.

Not all who walk by are supportive of marriage equality, “but they’ve been really respectful and just want to talk about it and why it matters to us,” James Bennett, the Midwest Regional Director of Lambda Legal, told WUIS Radio in Springfield. “So it’s just been phenomenal.”

The Equality Illinois/Lambda Legal booth on the fairgrounds is near the Heartland Area by the west side of the Skyglider, close to Gate 2 at Peoria Road and Sangamon Avenue.

Services available at the booth include voter registration and information about getting legal assistance, the state’s civil union law, LGBT-supportive clergy and congregations and anti-bullying efforts.

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