



Presented by Be the Transformational Change

The annual Guiding Light Award celebrates visionary leaders within the LGBTQIA+ community who have sparked meaningful progress in the fight for equity, visibility, and social justice. This distinguished honor is awarded to individuals whose courage, innovation, and unwavering commitment have created lasting impact. Through this recognition, we seek to uplift those who illuminate paths of transformation and to inspire future generations to continue pushing boundaries for a more inclusive world.

2025 Recipient: Rachel Crandall-Crocker

Rachel Crandall-Crocker, MSW, is a pioneering LGBTQIA+ advocate, psychotherapist, and founder of International Transgender Day of Visibility, which she launched in 2009 to celebrate living transgender people and their contributions. A lifelong activist, she co-founded Transgender Michigan in 1997, one of the first statewide transgender organizations in the U.S., offering support services, education, and advocacy. Rachel also established the first transgender-specific help line in the United States.

A dedicated mental health professional, she specializes in counseling transgender individuals and their families, and has trained countless providers nationwide to offer affirming care. Her leadership and influence have driven policy change worldwide and earned recognition from the White House, the Human Rights Campaign, and others. Her many honors include the Liberty Bell Award from the State Bar of Michigan, the TORCH Award, the Game Changers Award from the Detroit Tigers, and the prestigious Michigan State University Grand Alumni Award.

2024 Recipient: Judy Bowenwiener

Judy Bowenwiener is a trailblazing transgender activist whose decades of advocacy have shaped the LGBTQIA+ movement from the Stonewall era to today. After moving to New York City from Tennessee in the 1960s, she became an early leader in the fight for transgender rights, participating in the first Pride march and founding critical support organizations like Transvestites and Transsexuals, which evolved into groups such as Transsexuals Anonymous and STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries). Her work has focused on transgender visibility, inclusion, and housing justice for those most marginalized. Now based in Las Vegas, Judy remains a powerful force in the community, actively involved with The LGBTQ+ Center of Southern Nevada and international advocacy through groups like Trans United. Her unwavering dedication has earned her recognition such as the 2023 Trans Icon Award, honoring her lasting impact on generations of transgender people.

