

OCTOBER 2023

LOOKOUT

LOOKOUT

**IMPACT REPORT
2024**

What will it take for Arizona's gay bars to stop overdoses? Pg. 17



What's Inside

Letter from Jake	3	That's growth	12
Our DNA	4	The tea	14
Celebration!	7	QNN	16
What they said	10	Futures	19
We out here	11	The team	24

Message from the Executive Director

As 2024 draws to a close, we find ourselves navigating a landscape fraught with challenges that will test the very fabric of our communities. Yet, amidst this adversity, I've been continually inspired by the unwavering resilience, courage, and accountability demonstrated by our exceptional team, dedicated partners, talented writers, and the vibrant LGBTQ+ community we serve.

This year, *LOOKOUT* remained steadfast in our mission to deliver free and accessible content, amplifying the voices and stories that resonate most deeply within our community. Our incredible partners like AZ Mirror, The New Times, The Appeal, AZ Agenda, and Tucson Sentinel, rose to the occasion, providing invaluable support when we needed it most. Their commitment to fostering equality and inclusivity has been nothing short of remarkable.

Leading this organization fills me with immense pride, especially as we champion the diverse tapestry of the queer experience and champion tirelessly for equal respect, rights, and opportunities for all. Our fearless journalism, from exposing injustice to celebrating the remarkable achievements of queer individuals across Arizona, ensures that our voices are heard loud and clear.

LOOKOUT stands as a beacon of truth, shining a light on LGBTQ+ issues through in-depth, accountability-driven reporting. As the sole newsroom of its kind in Arizona, we empower queer individuals to make informed decisions about their communities and local politics.

In the year ahead, *LOOKOUT's* commitment to community-driven journalism will only grow stronger. We envision a future where our platform serves as a catalyst for positive change, fostering dialogue, understanding, and a stronger sense of belonging for all. We will continue to expand our reach, deepen our investigative reporting, and provide a platform for diverse voices within the LGBTQ+ community.

This journey would not be possible without your unwavering support. Your generosity enables *LOOKOUT* to illuminate the queer experience, advocate for equality, and create lasting change. You are the driving force behind our impact on the LGBTQ+ community in Arizona and beyond. Thank you for being an integral part of our story.

-Jake



JAKE HYLTON

Founding Executive
Director of LOOKOUT



Our Mission and Vision

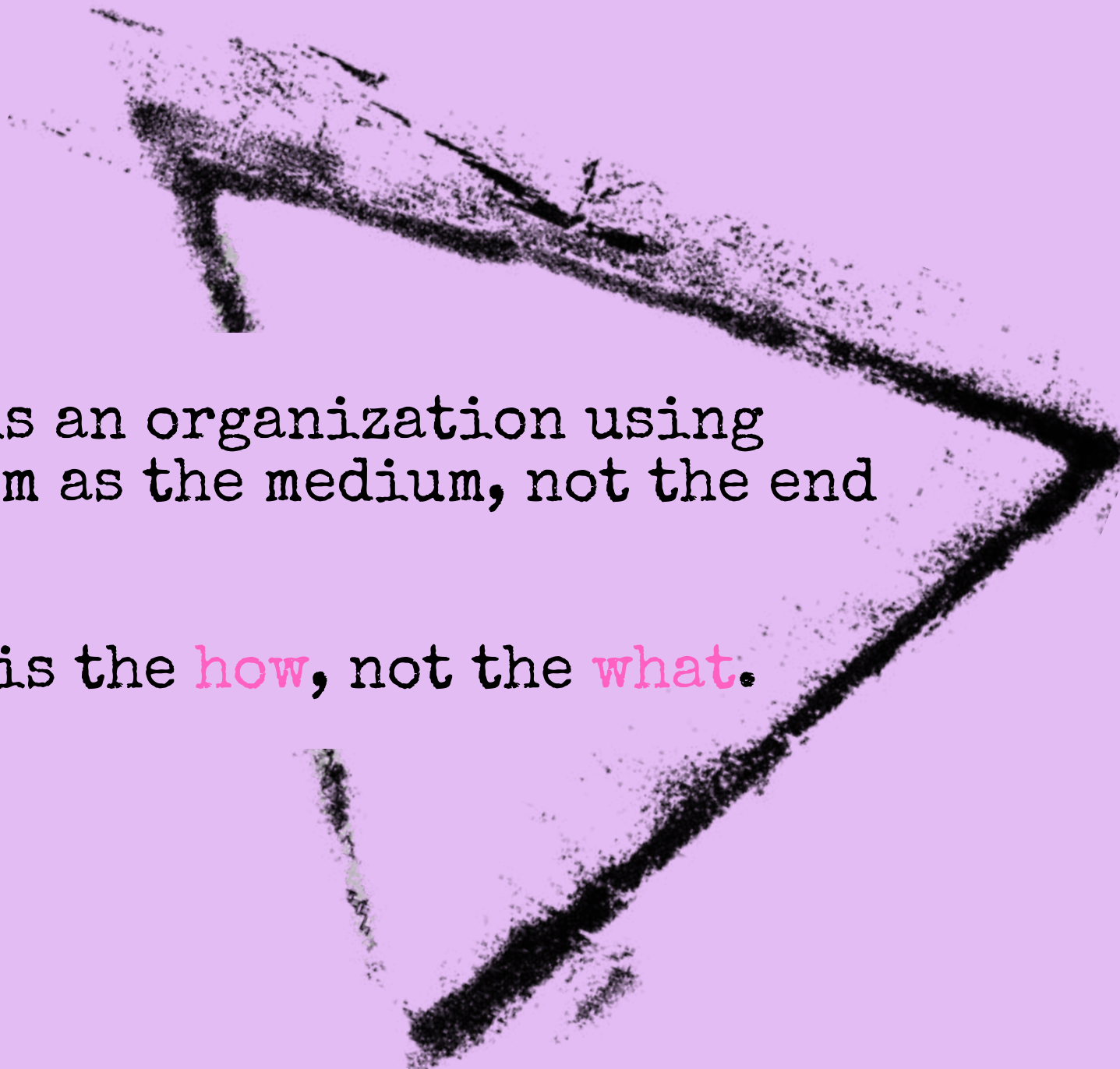
We are dedicated to delivering fearless journalism and dynamic community events that amplify and expand LGBTQ+ representation in news coverage. Our mission is to engage, empower, and strengthen LGBTQ+ communities and their allies by telling authentic, impactful stories that transcend stereotypes, hold power to account, and champion equality and respect for all.

Our vision is to inspire and accelerate a queer experience that is free from injustice, fulfilling the promise of equal respect, rights, and opportunities for everyone. We strive to ensure that LGBTQ+ news is not just present but prominent, fostering a society where every voice is heard, every story is elevated, and every individual is celebrated.

How we started

In December 2022, *LOOKOUT* started off as a passion project by our Editor-in-Chief Joseph Darius Jaafari, who was working as an investigative journalist. Recognizing that local outlets were failing to cover issues within his community in a thoughtful, deep, or respectful way, Jaafari decided to start *LOOKOUT Phoenix* to provide a space for up-to-date news on what was happening within the state's queer spaces and in government.

Within the first two months Jake Hylton, with extensive experience working in startups and managing arts organizations, was voted in as the inaugural Executive Director. We became a federally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization as of January 27, 2023. Soon after, "Phoenix" got dropped from our name as we became focused on statewide coverage.



LOOKOUT is an organization using journalism as the medium, not the end result.

Our work is the **how**, not the **what**.



LOOKOUT

LOOKOUT

AWARDS AND MENTIONS

The impact of LOOKOUT's presence is felt by the Arizona community far and wide. This is reflected in our awards which include the following:

**2024
Best Newsletter
award winner
selected**

The Phoenix
New Times

**2024
Best Source of
LGBTQ+ news**

Phoenix Magazine

**National
Audience
Choice 2024**

Glen Nelson Center
NextChallenge

**2024 Spirit
of BJ Bud
Community
Award**

Phoenix Pride

**3rd Place: Best
Sustained News
Coverage/Series**

AZ Media Awards

**1st Place:
Newswriting
and reporting
Excellence**

AZ Media Awards

**1st Place:
Best Newsletter**

AZ Media Awards

But we don't do this work for the awards. Our impact among our readers is what's most important. Here are some of our wins this year:

- For the first time, *LOOKOUT* exposed licensed counselors in Arizona who were still utilizing conversion therapy despite an executive order that restrict funds allowing them to practice. Our reporting resulted in dozens of people coming forward about their own abuses coming out of a Mesa practice.
- *LOOKOUT*'s reporting was cited by community members as reasons for they were not giving money to both nonprofit and privately owned organizations both within and outside the community.
- *LOOKOUT* received our first aggregated story by *LGBTQ Nation*, showing our reporting is reaching national audiences. Our newsletter was also used as an example in how to build audience trust by *Trusting News Collective*.

What we're celebrating

\$793k

Funds raised since our launch in 2022

\$20k

Annual recurring revenue from members

13k

Total subscribed audience by end of 2024

3,500

Copies of our magazine distributed across Arizona

154

Stories published through 2024

24

Local and national news partners





Trust in News Survey

Across 2023 and the beginning of 2024, LOOKOUT hired 23 queer and allied ambassadors across AZ to conduct interviews within LGBTQ+ communities about what they want from their local LGBTQ+ news outlet. After more than 100 hours of interviews, our survey found:

90%

said the community's issues were not reflected in news coverage

60%

considered LGBTQ+ stories in news were inaccurate.

30%

felt represented in local coverage

<10%

trusted local outlets to cover their community responsibly

Local Community Support

LOOKOUT has moved beyond the computer screen to show up for the community in real life.

OUTWATCH Fest gathered > 500 people in various community events to help build community. The entire week we raised \$4,000.

During OUTWATCH Fest, **LOOKOUT had harm reduction and testing services** at every event throughout the week, providing access to the entire community.

We've tabled Phoenix Pride, Tucson Pride, Melrose Street Fair, Rainbows Festival, Chandler Pride, HRC's State Resiliency Party, Splinter Collective Gala, them's Market, and Fruity Poetry night and **handed out thousands of magazines.**

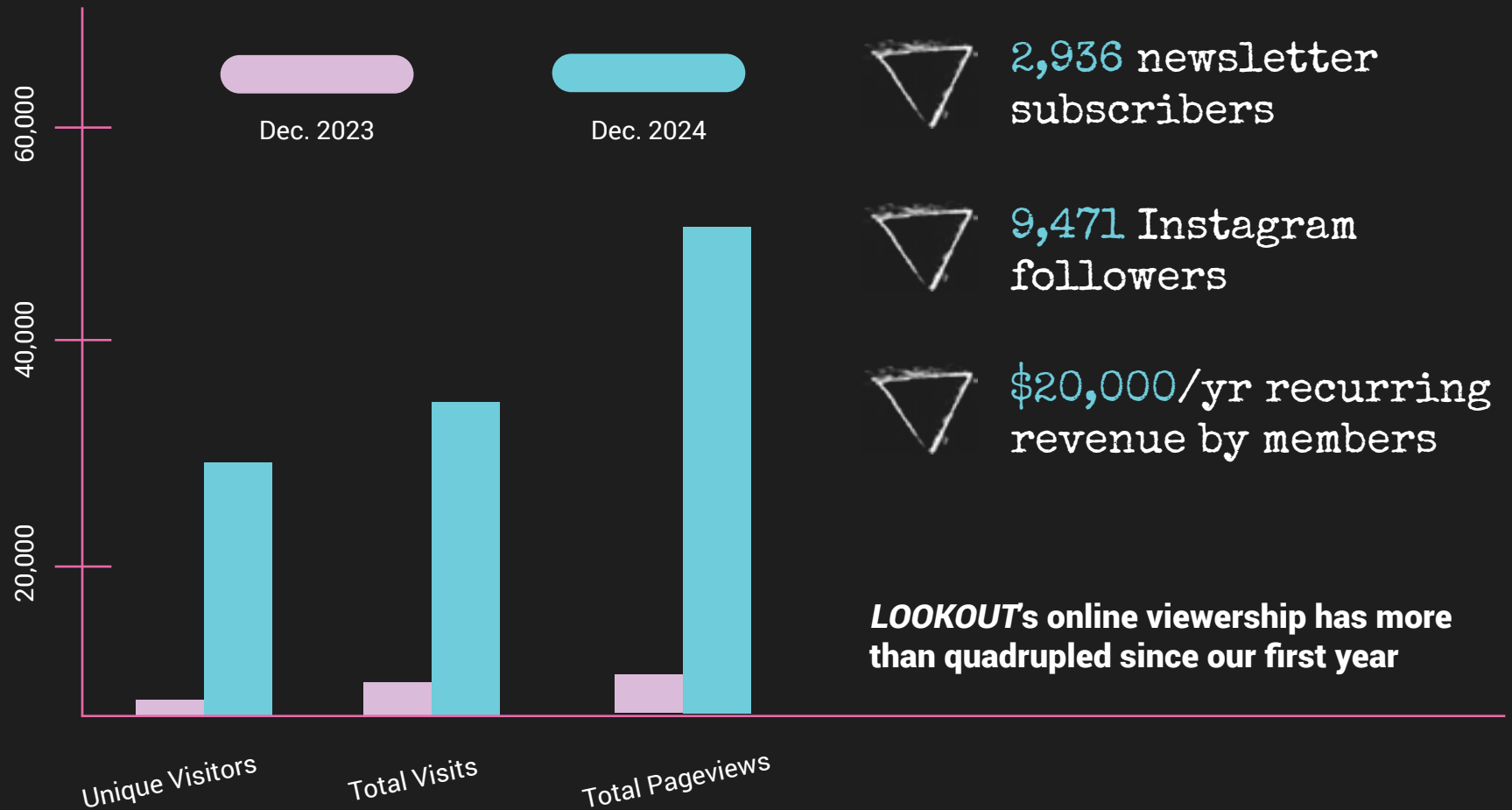
Our **Summer of Solutions series helped 200 people** learn about community resources.

During the Summer of Solutions event, **we gave out 10 HIV testing kits, eight boxes of Naloxone, and dozens of drug testing strips.**

We realize that we need to show up for the LGBTQ+ community in tangible ways and we will continue to make our presence known and felt in 2025.

Incredible Growth

LOOKOUT's reach has grown steadily, solidifying our need to amplify LGBTQ+ voices, ignite real change, and make sure no story goes untold. As of Dec. 1, 2024, we have:





Our top stories in 2024

01

A hate group's influence in Tucson

The Reid Park Zoo cancelled a Pride event at the request of a fringe LGBTQ+ group aligned with recognized hate groups such as Turning Point USA and the LGB Alliance.

increase family-friendly drag performances
queens
Get the Inside Scoop: See
rainbow
mo
de
community
Animal Rainbow with crafts for
artists big and small
Catch an animal encounter or a keeper chat to
hear about your Zoo favorites from the people wh
care them from them every day!



02

Phoenix Pride's detractors say the organization isn't listening:

LOOKOUT interviewed two-dozen people, from local business owners to volunteers, who said that while Phoenix Pride is welcome, they need to do more than throw a party.



Our top stories in 2024

03

Equality Arizona is back, but under a leader who allegedly doomed it.

After quietly losing all its staff last year, Equality Arizona – one of the state’s longest running LGBTQ+ advocacy orgs—faced closure. But a familiar face brought it back, and not everyone is OK with it.



04

Frustrated Community Members Question Flagstaff Pride’s Ethics

A last-minute appearance by Dr. Jill Biden at this year’s Flagstaff Pride left community members to lash out against their local Pride organization.





During the summer, LOOKOUT partnered with Q Voice News and QVegas to launch a one-of-a-kind collaborative news model for LGBTQ+ media outlets wanting to cover the General Election.

The Queer News Network (QNN) aimed to redefine LGBTQ+ journalism by uniting newsrooms across the nation in a coalition dedicated to producing nuanced and in-depth reporting on downballot issues in key states.

From October 1 to November 12, QNN monitored select candidates (from federal to school board level) notable for endorsements from organizations promoting gender-based or political violence, alongside related ballot initiatives.

Queer News Network hired eight interns to assist in their coverage from the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY. The institution also allowed QNN to create a pop-up newsroom on Election Day in their

newsroom in New York City from Oct. 28 through Nov. 9, 2025.

Interns and freelancers ended up producing a total of 42 original stories for QNN and its news partners.

Under the Election Desk Project, QNN launched a weekly newsletter for a 4-week period. In that time span, QNN increased their newsletter readership from 60 people when first announced QNN to 153 readers with no paid marketing budget. The open rate held consistently above 75% with a click through rate that never dropped below 11%.

And with our partnerships in place, QNN's stories reached more than 130,000 readers.

With a grant by the Hopewell Foundation, LOOKOUT fully funded QNN with plans that in the future it will sit under us as a program.

ELECTION DAY 2024

SOCIAL MEDIA USERS FLAME CONSPIRACIES ON ELECTION DAY

Posts on Truth Social, X, and TikTok share misleading or false claims on ballot counting and "rigged" elections.

QNN

ELECTION DAY 2024

OKLAHOMA'S JUDICIAL RACE MIGHT SHIFT BALANCE ON THE COURT

Follow our live blog on this story and other local issues on Election Day in Oklahoma at queer.n.com

QUEER NEWS NETWORK

QNN

Kentucky may keep some polling locations open after technical problems

Kentucky Democrats filed a motion requesting Jefferson County polls stay open until 8 p.m.

QNN

OHIO INCUMBENT WITH ANTI-TRANS CAMPAIGN BEING CHALLENGED

Incumbent Gary Click is running against Blaine Selvey, who said she was a "longshot" candidate.

QNN


ELECTION DAY 2024

"It's a sign!"

Illinois residents are reporting seeing rainbows at polling sites, and declaring it a symbolic sign of support for the state's first openly gay U.S. Congressman.

QUEER NEWS NETWORK

QNN



ELECTION DAY 2024

TRANS PRISONERS IN ARIZONA PREFER HARRIS OVER TRUMP...

But many won't (or can't) cast their vote this year due to felony voter laws, or lack of interest.

QNN



A LOOK TO OUR FUTURE

Emboldening

To ensure we can meet the demand of our growing queer community, LOOKOUT has ambitious goals for the future. This requires focus, determination, and a steadfast commitment to journalism and the power it has to transform communities into healthy, active, functional, and caring communities. We will be digging our heels deeper into the kind of accountability journalism LOOKOUT is known for. This means using our resources to tell stories that are deeply sourced and nuanced. We will continue our commitment that getting stories right – not fast – is essential for journalistic integrity and trust in the industry. We also will continue to tell stories that continue to shine a light where people refuse to or don't have the ability. We do this without fear of retribution or pursuit of fame, but because it is just.

Increasing

By the end of 2025, we are hiring our first part-time political reporter, continuing our fellowship program with a safety fellow, and will also re-commit to using interns to help assist in news coverage during the summer months. But in order for queer Arizonans to receive the news coverage they deserve, we are working to increase our staff from two to seven employees, triple our freelance writers, and expand our internship and fellowship programs. We also are looking to continue the success of the Queer News Network to activate national news outlets in coverage of important issues undercovered in the community. This growth is crucial if we hope to realize our vision of equal respect, rights, and opportunity for all people through fearless, fact-based journalism highlighting the LGBTQ+ experience.

Expanding

LOOKOUT's mission doesn't stop at Arizona's borders. We are using 2025 as an opportunity to venture out and see where LOOKOUT is needed most, because what is happening in Arizona is not unique to us, and there are many other states with news deserts that lack accountability for the LGBTQ+ community. This year, you'll start to see us dabble and expand our accountability journalism into the vibrant communities of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Nevada. We'll extend our reach soon after that into Southern states as well as the Core Midwest and Mid-Atlantic region. Our approach is strategic: instead of satellite offices, we'll invest directly in local talent, hiring on-the-ground reporters as general assignment investigators who are deeply embedded in their communities.





The Team

Jake Hylton

Founding Executive Director
jake@lookoutnews.org

Joseph Darius Jaafari

Founder, Editor in Chief
joseph@lookoutnews.org

BOARD MEMBERS

For inquiries on board membership, please contact:
board@lookoutnews.org

Meg Taylor - President

Glenn Wike - Secretary

Gaelle Esposito - Treasurer

Jenny Guzman

Pita Juarez

Pedro Lucero (2025)

Drea Orozco (2025)

Jake Hylton

Joseph Darius Jaafari (Ex-Officio)

Keith Hilzendeger- Tresasurer Emeritus