New funding sought for LGBT Map Evansville project

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Dr. Amie McKibban, associate professor of psychology at the University of Southern Indiana, has launched a Kickstarter campaign to provide continued support for Map Evansville, a web-based community asset map and directory which measures area businesses' inclusivity of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) customers and employees in Evansville and surrounding communities.

The project was initiated by McKibban in 2014 and received grant support from USI's College of Liberal Arts and Outreach and Engagement, as well as support from other USI and community sponsors. With grant funding expired, McKibban's goal is to raise $4,439 to sustain the site through 2017, with a long-range goal of supporting the project through corporate sponsorships.

The website directory quickly outgrew current software after Indiana Governor Mike Pence signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). Participating businesses more than doubled. McKibban plans to upgrade current software to allow for expansion of the project and to develop a mobile app. "We have a large LGBT population here who have a lot of allies, friends and family members," said McKibban. "They want to know they can walk into a business and feel comfortable, be treated fairly and are supported."

While businesses and organizations in the Map Evansville directory receive a sticker that can be displayed, this project differs from many of the other sticker campaigns developed in reaction to the RFRA. "We really want to know you are a business that supports everyone, and we also want to know you actively work toward inclusion," said McKibban. In order to be included, businesses and organizations fill out assessments to measure their level of inclusivity of the LGBT community.

The Map Evansville Kickstarter campaign runs through May 17. For more information contact Dr. Amie McKibban at armckibban@usi.edu or 812-465-1222.