

Diversity Center director steps down

Group + Lesbians
 Jim Brown ran nonprofit organization for six years

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By J.M. BROWN

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SANTA CRUZ — Jim Brown, who has served six years as executive director of the Diversity Center and is credited with rescuing the nonprofit during the economic collapse, has decided to step down.

Brown, 45, said he needs to spend more time with his family in Corralitos.

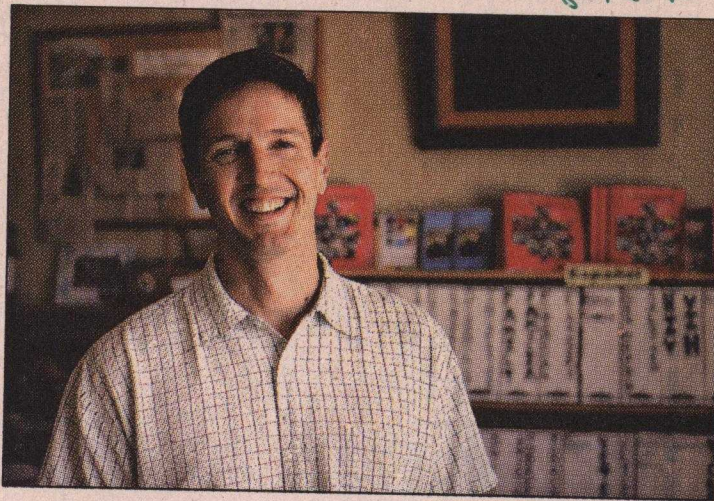
"I feel like it is time to step down and give someone with more energy the opportunity to do the work," Brown said.

Brown will stay in the job through the end of November, unless the Santa Cruz center hires a replacement

sooner. The Soquel Avenue organization — which advocates on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning people — announced the job opening this week.

"Jim has been a highly effective executive director over the past six years and has made a tremendous difference for LGBTQ people in Santa Cruz County," said Adam Spickler, an aide for Assemblyman Bill Monning and chairman of the center's board.

"We are truly in awe of the many valuable contributions he's made in significantly raising the profile of the center and our community," Spickler



KEVIN JOHNSON/SENTINEL

Jim Brown will be resigning from his position as executive director of the Diversity Center in Santa Cruz.

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said. "He has represented the heart of the Diversity Center, championing the important work we do."

Friends and co-workers will fete Brown during a going-away party from 6-8 p.m. Tuesday at the 418 Project, a dance studio where Brown served as executive director for three years after moving to the county in 1995. The event will be open to the public.

The Diversity Center was founded in 1989 and employs two full-time employees and four part-timers.

The center has been a vocal advocate for equal rights for LGBT people, including during the Proposition 8 battle that began in 2008 and continues today as the same-sex marriage ban moves toward the nation's highest court. The center is also the primary organizer of the annual Gay Pride Parade.

Yet, Brown said his biggest challenge has been keeping the center strong through a recession that hit nonprofits hard beginning in 2008. He reduced the center's reliance

'His (Brown's) legacy will be felt for years to come.'

CYNTHIA DRULEY,
 Triangle Speakers founder

on ever-uncertain grant funding to focus more on increasing donations and partnering with other organizations. He oversaw a merger with Triangle Speakers, a program that works to eliminate prejudice against the LGBT community.

In addition to righting the center's financial ship, Cynthia Druley, a Triangle Speakers founder who is head of the Court Appointed Special Advocates agency, said Brown made the organization more accessible to a broader spectrum of LGBT people and increased its services.

"I can't think of anyone else in the LGBT community who has had a greater impact," Druley said. "His legacy will be felt for years to come."

Brown also serves on the Cultural Council's board.

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