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**SPECIAL REPORT:**

ACCESSING EQUALITY  
CALIFORNIA

Featuring:

**LGBT**  
**COMIC BOOK**  
**HEROES**

**REAL-LIFE**  
SUPERHEROES!

**COSTA RICA!**

**JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE**  
TALKS 'FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS'

**THE**  
**NEW AGE**  
**OF**  
**ACTIVISM**

WITH THE **YOUNG**  
**PROFESSIONALS**  
**COUNCIL**

**FRONTIERS** **INLA**



## Bringin' PHILANTHROPY Back

Tom Whitman thinks most people want to be involved with something bigger than themselves. They want to feel they've made a difference in someone's life and are part of a vibrant, active community. He started the Gang of 100 six years ago as a way to get people involved and make sure everyone has fun in the process.

The Gang is a loosely organized group of guys and girls in L.A. who get together to raise money for a variety of charitable causes in the community. "Our overall goal is to make fundraising fun and to harness the power of our social networks of friends and colleagues to make a difference," Tom says.

It all started when Tom was elected to the Board of Directors of AIDS Project Los Angeles. He formed his first AIDS Walk team comprised of a bunch of friends who got together to raise money and have a good time. They ended up having such a great time and raising so much money—they were one of the top five teams on the Walk that year—that Tom wanted to translate that feeling and fundraising power into a year-round movement.

"Our goal is to put the 'fun' back in fundraising and to motivate a younger group of guys to get involved—those who maybe haven't traditionally been approached by the mainstream charities," he says. "I think the younger crowd is the one the established charities don't do a great job of reaching out to. Just because someone who is 25 or 30 may not be able to write a \$1,000 check all at once doesn't mean they can't raise a ton of money—and it doesn't mean their contribution isn't just as valid. When you involve someone at a younger age and they have a good experience, they will continue to volunteer and fundraise and choose to make a difference as they get more established."

Members are left to their own devices to figure out

how to raise money each year. There is no overhead and no staff—each person figures out how to fulfill his or her obligation. The only requirement for joining is that each member commits to raising a certain amount of money each year (\$1,000 to \$2,000 annually) and to personally donate a minimum of \$250 to \$500.

Some people join the Gang for AIDS Walk, and others do the LifeCycle and some throw house parties to benefit a charity. The main power of the Gang is that it consists of people willing to harness their contacts and social networks to help create their own events or add to existing ones. And Tom says there are a million different ways to have fun and make a difference at the same time. "You name it and we try to be involved," he says. "We've produced everything from house parties to AIDS Walk events to bartender auctions to dance events. Members have supported every single major fundraising event in town."

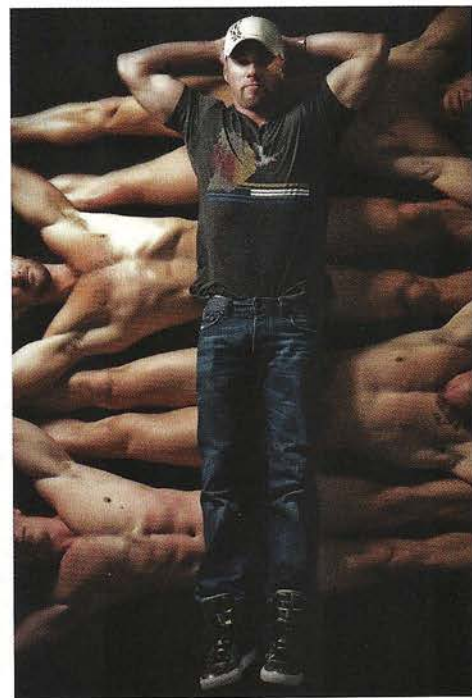
The Gang has raised half a million dollars at AIDS Walk alone since it started, and has donated money to LGBT charities such as Point Foundation, Trevor Project, Camp Laurel and LAGLC, as well as charities outside the LGBT world, like Heal the Bay.

"One of the lessons I've learned with the Gang is that when you ask someone to get involved or to give, they often do," he says. "People often don't ask. Every person I have asked to be involved in the Gang has walked away with a positive experience—they've made a difference, met new friends and had a great time."

Upcoming events the Gang of 100 will be taking part in include a pool party at Tom's house on Aug. 20 to benefit APLA, a Cirque de Soleil event on Aug. 6 and AIDS Walk on Oct. 16.

"My parents instilled in me the idea that you should be an involved member of your community," Tom says. "When I started producing events in the LGBT

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE: GANG OF 100



world, I realized that I had the ability to mobilize people, not just to come out to an event, but also to motivate them to raise money or support a cause. I could send an email to 10,000 people in five minutes and motivate them to do something. I am very lucky that my skill set enables me to be able to make that kind of difference. And if I had that ability and didn't use it, I wouldn't consider myself a very good person, or a contributing member of the community I care so much about."

[gangof100.com](http://gangof100.com)