

ALSO Youth Reopens Sarasota LGBTQ+ Center; Grand Opening Celebration October 11 - A Story of Loss & Renewal

One year after Hurricane Milton, ALSO Youth celebrates Sarasota center's reopening Oct. 11 with interactive activities & partners.

SARASOTA, FL, UNITED STATES,
September 11, 2025 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- [ALSO Youth](#) is proud to announce the reopening of its Sarasota Youth Center at 2195 Ringling Blvd, Sarasota, FL, with a Grand Opening Celebration on Saturday, October 11, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The event will feature interactive activities, and partner recognitions as the organization turns the page from last year's hurricane loss toward a stronger, modernized future.



Exterior view of ALSO Youth's new Sarasota Center at 2195 Ringling Blvd, Grand Opening October 11, 2025

"This is more than a ribbon cutting—it's a homecoming," said Annie Berkness, Executive Director of ALSO Youth. "In the year since Hurricane Milton, our community showed up for our young people in extraordinary ways. Reopening in Sarasota is both a promise kept and a fresh start."

The Grand Opening is presented with lead event support from the Gulf Coast Community Foundation and deep gratitude to Toby Deutsch, whose generosity is underwriting one year of rent for the new center.

Why This Reopening Matters: The Neuroscience of Belonging -

Psychologists and neuroscientists have long understood that adolescence is a critical period of brain development. During these years, the human brain is especially sensitive to stress, rejection, and social exclusion—but also remarkably open to growth, resilience, and healing when young people feel seen and supported.

"From a neurological standpoint, safe, trauma informed spaces are not just a commodity—they are life transforming experiences, that have the potential to save lives," said Dr. Johana Kuemerle Pinillos, a Sarasota-based clinical therapist. "When LGBTQ+ youth are given a place where their identities are affirmed, their brains actually shift out of a state of hypervigilance and threat detection. Which creates space for healing, learning, emotional regulation, and for hope."

For LGBTQ+ teens, the absence of such spaces can be devastating. Research from The Trevor Project shows that 41% of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered suicide in the past year, with risk highest among those lacking family or school support. Conversely, youth who report having at least one affirming space see their suicide risk cut nearly in half.



Photos showing hurricane damage at ALSO Youth's former Sarasota Center, including ceiling collapse, water damage, and displaced youth spaces.

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The reopening of ALSO Youth's Sarasota Center is thus not only a community milestone—it's a public health intervention.

A Story of Loss and Renewal -

The original Sarasota Center served hundreds of young people each year through counseling, peer support groups, and drop-in hours. Its sudden closure after Hurricane Milton in October 2024 created a painful gap at a moment when youth needed connection most.

For the past year, programs have continued at ALSO Youth's Bradenton location, pop-up sites, and online. But

for many Sarasota teens, Bradenton was simply out of reach. Young people were cobbling together rides from friends, taking long public transit trips, or giving up entirely.

“Our Sarasota youth were desperate for a place of their own,” said Berkness. “Bradenton was too far, and too many kids were falling through the cracks.”

One of ALSO Youth's licensed therapists described the urgency this way:

"I have witnessed the impact this program has on the local LGBTQ+ population for 3 years. It is so inspiring to see people get the services they need, and address their mental health challenges with grace and gratitude knowing the magnitude of this gift. I am very fortunate to be part of the program and to serve this population, especially during these difficult times."

What the New Center Will Provide -
Located at 2195 Ringling Blvd, the modernized Sarasota Center will offer:

Drop-in hours for youth ages 10–24 to find community and belonging.

Peer support groups addressing identity, resilience, and wellness.

[Free, affirming mental-health counseling with licensed professionals.](#)

Leadership development programs that equip youth to become advocates.

Family engagement nights to help parents and caregivers grow in understanding.

These services complement ALSO Youth's Bradenton location, ensuring that young people across Sarasota and Manatee Counties have access to affirming care.

A Local Story with National Resonance -

The reopening of ALSO Youth's Sarasota Center also reflects a broader national conversation: how communities respond when LGBTQ+ youth face both political headwinds and natural disasters.

"In Florida, LGBTQ+ teens are navigating not only bullying and rejection, but laws that restrict how their identities can even be discussed in schools," said Dr. Johana Kuemerle Pinillos. "The reopening of this center is a direct act of resilience. It shows that even in difficult climates, local communities can protect their young people and help them thrive."

Event Details

What: ALSO Youth Sarasota Center Grand Opening

When: Saturday, October 11, 2025 • 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Where: 2195 Ringling Blvd, Sarasota, FL



ALSO Youth

ADVOCACY · LEADERSHIP · SUPPORT · OUTREACH

ALSO Youth's logo represents their mission of Advocacy, Leadership, Support, and Outreach within the LGBTQ+ community

Who: Youth & families, supporters, partners, media (all ages welcome)

RSVP/Info: [Save the Date - ALSO Youth SRQ Center Grand Reopening](#)

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About ALSO Youth

Founded in 1992, ALSO Youth provides Advocacy, Leadership, Support, and Outreach for LGBTQ+ youth and allies in Sarasota and Manatee Counties. Programs include free mental-health counseling, drop-in centers, leadership opportunities, scholarships, and community education—creating places where young people belong, grow, and thrive.

Learn more at <https://www.alsoyouth.org>

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