

Ronn Richard Opening Remarks
2014 Gay Games: Lessons and Legacies
The City Club
Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015

Good evening. Thank you for being here. It's wonderful to reunite at The City Club so that we may celebrate the legacy and learn from last year's Gay Games 9.

As I stand before you, I'm reminded of addressing the crowd just six months ago at the Gay Games' closing ceremony. It was one of the proudest moments in my 12 years leading the Cleveland Foundation, and also as a Clevelander.

What an inspirational landmark event for Cleveland and our region! We really did "go all out," didn't we?

The Cleveland Foundation was honored to be the first presenting sponsor in Gay Games history, building on a century of standing up for what's right.

Of course the Games featured impressive and entertaining sporting and cultural events, but more importantly, people all over the world got to know Cleveland and Akron as progressive and inclusive cities.

The Games instilled a growing sense of enthusiasm and forward progress in our community. That spirit remains with us today. You can feel it in this room. You can feel it here in Cleveland and in Akron. And I look forward to working with all of you to extend that momentum.

I recently read an op-ed by *New York Times* columnist Frank Bruni. Perhaps some of you have also read the piece, which chronicled progress made for LGBT rights but also the unfinished work ahead of us.

Mr. Bruni wrote something that stuck with me. In New York City, one of the most liberal cities in the world, he still feels tense when holding the hand of his partner in public.

We want to see the day when people everywhere can freely hold their partner's hand, which Mr. Bruni called an "expression of tenderness and basic humanity."

Today, let's work hand-in-hand to make that a reality. Gay Games 9 was just the beginning. Together, we will ensure that this region remains diverse and inclusive, and we will lead the way by advocating for changes to state laws that result in greater equality for all.

And now, I'd like to turn the podium over to John Petures, CEO of the Akron Community Foundation. I am especially proud that our two community foundations partnered to support Gay Games 9, and we'll continue to work together in this arena long into the future.