

Donna Rose

Author – Educator - Advocate

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Bio/CV

Overview



Donna Rose is a nationally recognized speaker, educator, and advocate on transgender and transsexual issues. She is active in the leadership of several national GLBT Advocacy organizations, is the author of an award-winning memoir, is heavily involved in national corporate diversity efforts. Her website (www.donnarose.com) remains an active source of information and support for/about the transgender community. She is invited to share her inspirational, uplifting and fascinating journey with audiences around the country.

The topic of ‘Transgender’ has gained increased visibility in mainstream media in recent months (cover story for Newsweek 5/21/2007, Entertainment Tonight, Barbara Walters 20/20 special on transgender youth, among others). Much of this newfound interest is due to the fact that transgender people are sharing their remarkable stories, and putting their faces to a condition that continues to intrigue and amaze, yet at the same time remains steeped in misconception and ignorance. Donna is at the forefront of that effort.



Donna’s story is more than simply a journey across gender. Although that may be the most obvious indicator, it is actually a much deeper journey of self-discovery, and of self-definition. It is a journey to revisit decisions made about her and for her the moment she was born, and to reclaim her own destiny. It is a journey that features universally human experience: courage, fear, doubt, sadness, happiness, and ultimately, fulfillment. In short, it is a journey to find inner peace. Along the way, Donna uses her unique experience to provide valuable and fascinating perspectives on gender, culture, and life.



Donna is invited to share her incredible story at conferences, schools, and workplaces across the country. She has been featured on Entertainment Tonight, in USA Today, in Marie Claire Magazine, and in many local and national media efforts. She was identified as a “Gay Corporate Leader” by The Advocate magazine (March 2004). Donna’s presentation at Eastman Kodak is featured in a Human Rights Campaign training DVD titled “Understanding Transgender”. In short, Donna is a pioneer whose story has meaning for us all.

Donna lives and works in Scottsdale, AZ.

Donna Rose - Selected Achievements and Honors

- Donna is the first and currently the only transgender member of the **Human Rights Campaign (HRC)** Board of Directors. She serves as the national co-Chair for Diversity, and is on the HRC Business Council. She is invited to speak at their gala dinners across the country.
- Donna is the first and currently the only transgender member for the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (**GLAAD**) Board of Directors.
- Donna is the first and currently the only transgender member of the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (**NGLCC**) Board of Directors.
- Donna serves on the **Out and Equal Workplace Advocates** Transgender Advisory Committee.
- Donna is a on the **National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE)** Board of Advisors.
- Donna is past co-chair of the **Transgender Advocates of Central Texas (TACT)**, and a former board member for **Body Positive**, a Phoenix area AIDS organization.
- Donna was one of four transsexual women featured in a 4-part ‘Transgender Summit’ on **Entertainment Tonight** (May 2007). Avg. audience is 11-13 million people per episode.
- Donna was featured in a **USA Today** article about Transgender workplace issues (May 2006).
- Donna was featured in an extensive front-page article for the **Arizona Republic** (Phoenix, AZ) titled “*Valley Woman Hopes Story of Change Will Help Others.*” (October. 2005)
- Donna’s workplace transition was featured in a 2003 **DiversityInc Magazine** article that was selected as a finalist for a GLAAD Media Award.
- Donna was featured in a **Marie Claire Magazine** article highlighting women who have experienced significant physical changes in their lives. (November 2004)
- Donna’s recent **corporate training clients** include Con-Edison, JC Penny, Eastman Kodak, America Online, Chase, Sodexo USA, Boeringer-Ingelheim, Dell, Shell Oil, JD Edwards, Starbucks Coffee, and Cox Communications.
- Donna’s recent **university speaking engagements** include the University of Kansas, the University of Oregon, State University of New York at Brockport, and Syracuse University.
- Donna’s memoir, “*Wrapped In Blue: A Journey of Discovery*” (Living Legacy Press, 2003) was selected as a 2003 Texas Book Festival Featured selection, and remains one of the leading books featuring the unique and deeply personal experiences of a gender transition.
- Donna works with companies around the country to implement supportive workplace policy for their transgender employees. She is a contributing author for HRC publications “*Transgender in the Workplace – A Tool for Managers*” and “*Coming Out as Transgender*”.
- Donna regularly speaks at gala dinners across the country, where she has shared the stage with Joan Rivers, Jessica Lange, and Lee Ann Rymes (among others).
- Donna was invited to participate in the historic V-Day performance of “The Vagina Monologues” in Feb. 2004 that was featured in the documentary “Beautiful Daughters”. Audience members included actress Jane Fonda, and author Eve Ensler.
- Donna has provided **keynote addresses** at the Southern Comfort Conference, International Foundation for Gender Education Conference, Colorado Gold Rush Conference, Esprit Transgender Conference.
- Donna was presented with an Alumni Foundation Award for Courage and Leadership by Syracuse University (April 2007).
- Donna was presented with a Trinity Award for outstanding achievements to support the transgender community by the International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE) – 2007.
- Donna has been invited to participate as a GLBT community leader on the Hillary Clinton for President GLBT Steering Committee.

Donna Rose - Short Bio

Donna **R**ose is a nationally respected post-operative transsexual woman. She lived the first 40 years of her life as a successful man in a man's world. Today she is a well-known educator, author, advocate, and spokesperson of a condition that continues to intrigue and interest, yet remains steeped in misconception and ignorance.

Donna was born as David, in Chicago in 1959. Her father was a world-renowned mathematical biophysicist and author ("*Life Itself*", and other works) and her mother a stay-at-home mom. She has a younger sister (Judy) and brother (Jay).

The minute a doctor identifies a child as male or female, any number of culturally established norms, expectations, and roles are placed upon that child. At the same time, many other opportunities become closed, based simply upon birthright given by the physical reality of being a boy or a girl. David seemed to be a regular, normal boy. However, he realized that something seemed wrong from a young age. As he got older and gender began to take a more active role in directing his life he localized the problem to a dissonance between his physical reality as a boy and his developing self-identify that was far more in line with girls. Such is the reality for many transgender people.

As with many children, one of the most important motivators in his life was to ensure that his parents were proud of him. He excelled as a student, and there were no external indicators of the confusion growing within. As he reached puberty he realized that sharing his secret would undermine the respect and pride that his parents had for him. So, he buried it and embarked upon a life that would yield no traces of his situation.

Through his teen years David excelled an athlete. He began training and lifted weights to mold his masculine body to fit what our society expects from men, eventually growing his biceps to 22 inches and bench-pressing well over 300 pounds. He competed as a linebacker on the high school football team and as co-captain of the Varsity Wrestling team. In college he became a nationally ranked freestyle wrestler, won the CIAA Maritime Regional Collegiate Wrestling Tournament, and was selected to wrestle at the national collegiate championships in Montreal.

Donna graduated from Syracuse University with a degree in Radio/Television in 1981, got married, settled near Rochester, NY, and began a successful career as an Information Technology consultant to Fortune 500 companies. After several years of marriage his wife gave birth to a son. He seemed to have achieved a level of success that many strive to reach, yet relatively few achieve. The nagging burden of hiding his "secret" continued to come and go, and he dealt with it as best he could.

In 1996 Donna and her family moved to Scottsdale, AZ. She was nearly 40-years old. She had been married for over 15 years. As pressure to explore and express her true self continued to build she realized she could no longer contain the all-consuming fear, shame, and guilt of living a lie, and she finally decided to confront her gender issues rather than to hide them, or run from them.

Donna's extraordinary physical transformation involved hundreds of hours of painful electrolysis, extensive facial feminization surgeries, intensive hormone replacement therapy, voice therapy, and eventual Sex Reassignment Surgery in August of 2000. Her journey necessarily involved disclosing her situation to family, friends, and workplace peers. It involved explaining her situation to her 14-year old son. And, it involved the devastating revelation to her wife and the subsequent collapse of her marriage.

Donna never intended to become a spokesperson or an activist. After her transition she did what many transsexuals dream of doing – moving someplace where nobody knew of her unique history to start fresh. However, she felt a nagging need for closure which eventually led to publishing a memoir based upon her deeply personal journal entries. Her award winning book, “*Wrapped In Blue: A Journey of Discovery*”, continues to be a source of hope and information for many.

Donna is one of those rare people who are able to live two different, distinct lives within one lifetime. She has experienced life on both sides of the gender line, and has gained unique insights and perspectives that continue to intrigue, fascinate, and to amuse. She has taken a deep look at who and what she is, and has successfully freed herself from the fear, guilt, and shame that had directed her life for so many years. In short, Donna has finally become who she was meant to be.

Today Donna is very happy, and again lives in Scottsdale, Arizona. She has become a nationally recognized speaker, author, and advocate of transsexuals and transgender issues. Her uplifting message is more than simply one of sex or gender. It is a message of self-discovery, and of empowerment. It is a message that life rarely lends itself to simple binaries, and that each of us needs to celebrate the diversity that makes us unique. It is a message of breaking free from fear, of being who you are, and of living a truly authentic life. In short, it is an uplifting message of being human and of finding happiness that has value to us all.

