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+
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rocking the drag scene

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to know about Pride!
and more!

2022 PITTSBURGH PRIDE GUIDE



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Resource fair will take place throughout the game!

First 20,000 fans at the game will take home a Pirates Pride t-shirt.



[PIRATES.COM/PRIDE](https://pirates.com/pride)

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ON THE COVER

LYNDESEY SICKLER, photo by Mara Rago.



For the forgotten, the unwanted,
the abandoned and alone.
For all outsiders.

PUBLISHER

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JEFF FREEDMAN, Co-Creator

JIM SHEPPARD, Co-Creator

STAFF

ALASDAIR BLACKWELL, Digital Editor

LOU TACKAS, Contributing Editor

TIA BAILEY, Intern

PHOTOGRAPHY

MARA RAGO

G. MICHAEL BEIGAY

ADVERTISING INQUIRES

Ads@QBurgh.com

QBurgh.com/Advertise

CONTACT US

Info@QBurgh.com

Tel: 412-353-9759

P.O. Box 3363

Pittsburgh, PA 15230

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DAILY UPDATES
ON QBURGH.COM



Alasdair Blackwell (he/him & they/them) is the QBURGH

Digital Editor. He is a recent grad of Chatham University.



Roy Gloeckl resides in the southern hills of Pittsburgh, performing

communications specialties for a local university.



Drew Praskovich is a writer and filmmaker born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA.



G. Michael Beigay is a freelance photographer and special

education professional for Allegheny Intermediate Unit.



Chad Isaiah (he / him) is a Certified Fitness Coach,

getting his clients results beyond the numbers on the scale by helping them understand their value as a person.



Mara Rago is an established photographer specializing in head shots, portfolios, corporate, legal, families, pets, florals, events and fine art nudes.



Hansen Bursic (he/him) is an award-winning

filmmaker, writer, and LGBTQ+ activist.



Kyle Leotsakos works in both healthcare admin and

retail. He lives in the Greater Pittsburgh Area with his dog, Zeus.



Jason Shavers is a born and raised Pittsburgh native. He is an actor that has worked extensively on stage and not so extensively on screen



Michael Buzzelli is a stand-up comedian and sit-down

author. As a comedian, he has performed all around the country



Daniel Toro is a local Youtube and baker making the world a

sweeter place one cake at a time.



Aaron Valentic is a transplant from NYC with a passion to help and support the community.



Chrissy Costa is a local comedian known for her dry wit, satirical style of comedy, and big earrings.



Joe Wos sits around all day drawing funny pictures. He is left-handed.

the warhol:

PAOLA PIVI I WANT IT ALL

APRIL 22 - AUG 15

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Artworks courtesy of the artist and Perrotin, photo by Guillaume Ziccarelli.





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The 'Pride' Feeling



Pride month is by far my favorite time of the year. To me, it is way better than my birthday, New Year's, and the Fourth of July all combined. I live for Pride.

My first Gay Rights March was in 1979 as a teenager. It was me, my male best friend, and about a dozen and half lesbians walking down the streets of Oakland. As horns honked around us, we kept marching and chanting. It was an exhilarating, terrifying, liberating, and completely empowering experience. It was that cathartic moment when I realized that Pride is an emotion. Pride is felt. You feel Pride. As the years have passed, I have never forgotten how much that moment impacted me. From then when there were less than two dozen people marching to now having a few thousand people parading down the streets has made me appreciate the achievements that we together have accomplished in just my lifetime.

As QBurgh prints our first Pride Guide this year it has been an incredible journey. We are so proud of what QBurgh has accomplished so far and are excited about what QBurgh has yet to become. We launched QBurgh to help provide a sense of Community for our region that hasn't had a sense of unity in a long time. We know that this Pride Guide is more inclusive and speaks for our Community more than past attempts. When you are actually part of the Community then you can better represent it.

We are proud of what we are featuring in this Pride Guide. Thank you, Lyndsey Sickler, for your tireless service and dedication. You are an inspiration to us all. Congratulations to the Pride Star Award recipients. We never say thank you enough to the volunteers that make our organizations successful.

We hope to see you at a Pride celebration this year. I can honestly say that after all these years I still get that feeling, the "Pride Chills," each time that I attend a Pride event. I hope you do too.

Together in Pride,
Jeff Freedman
Co-Creator
QBurgh

Why Pride?



When I was sixteen years old someone tried to out me to my parents. I had begun my coming out journey the year before and, as many LGBTQ folks know, telling friends is usually the first step until you work up the courage to come out to family and parents. This person had found out through our mutual circle

and decided to take it upon themselves that they would rob me of an important and deeply personal step in the coming out process.

I can only assume that this person believed that I should be ashamed of who I am identifying as a gay man, that my parents would not love me as I am, and that I should hide away. Unfortunately for them I am extremely proud and my parents still very much love me, many years later.

Those feelings of shame and fear of the loss of loved ones are very familiar to every single LGBTQ person. **Pride is the remedy to those feelings.** And we need Pride now more than ever. Make no mistake, whether you are 10 or 100, you are glorious just the way that you are and you are not dancing on your own. This community is here to support you. Pittsburgh Pride belongs to you.

In this inaugural issue of QBurgh's Pittsburgh Pride Guide, dear reader, we are going to show you our Pride in Pittsburgh. The people, places, and things that celebrate and make the LGBTQ Community of Pittsburgh shine. You'll meet Lyndsey. They are a hero to generations of LGBTQ folks in Pittsburgh, always saying "yes" and helping. You'll meet the Shepherd Wellness Community that for 35 years has provided dignity and support to the HIV-positive community. We'll introduce or reintroduce you to Pittsburgh royalty, the queens and kings rocking the drag scene of Pittsburgh. And of course, we have all the details on the big Pride celebrations and parties.

So, why Pride? This is why.

Jim Sheppard
Co-Creator
QBurgh

The logo for QBurgh Weekly Newsletter features a stylized 'Q' with a rainbow gradient and a small rainbow flag icon. To the right of the 'Q' is the word 'BURGH' in large, white, sans-serif capital letters. Below 'BURGH' are the words 'WEEKLY' and 'NEWSLETTER' in smaller, white, sans-serif capital letters.

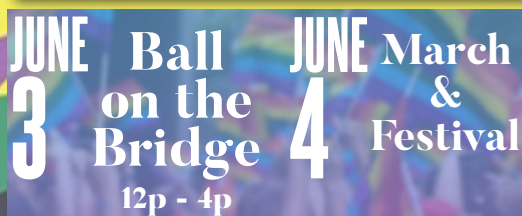
BURGH
WEEKLY
NEWSLETTER

**YOUR
INBOX
HAS NEVER
BEEN GAYER**

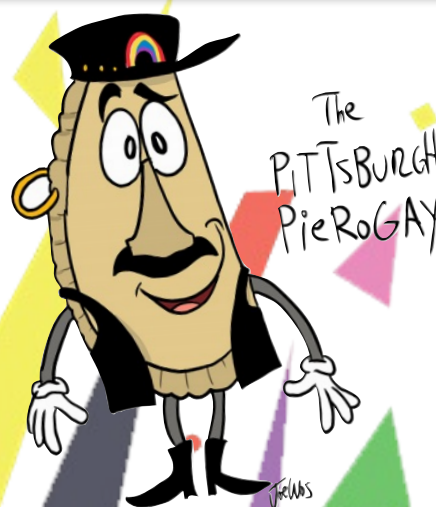
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What's **QUEER** & going on?



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Swissvale
Pride

JUNE
5

Parade + musicfest

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JUNE
11

WASHINGTON
PRIDE
PA

PRIDE NIGHT
AT PNC PARK

JUNE
17

JUNE
9

Crush
HOUR

Happy Hour for
Pittsburgh's Queer
Ladies!
@Necromancer
Brewing

JUNE
18

Pride
Millvale

More details Page 42

DORMONT
SPARK/
PRIDE

JUNE 25TH POTOMAC AVE.

JUNE
22

femmes & thems night

P*TOWN

EVEN MORE EVENTS ON QBURGH.COM/EVENTS

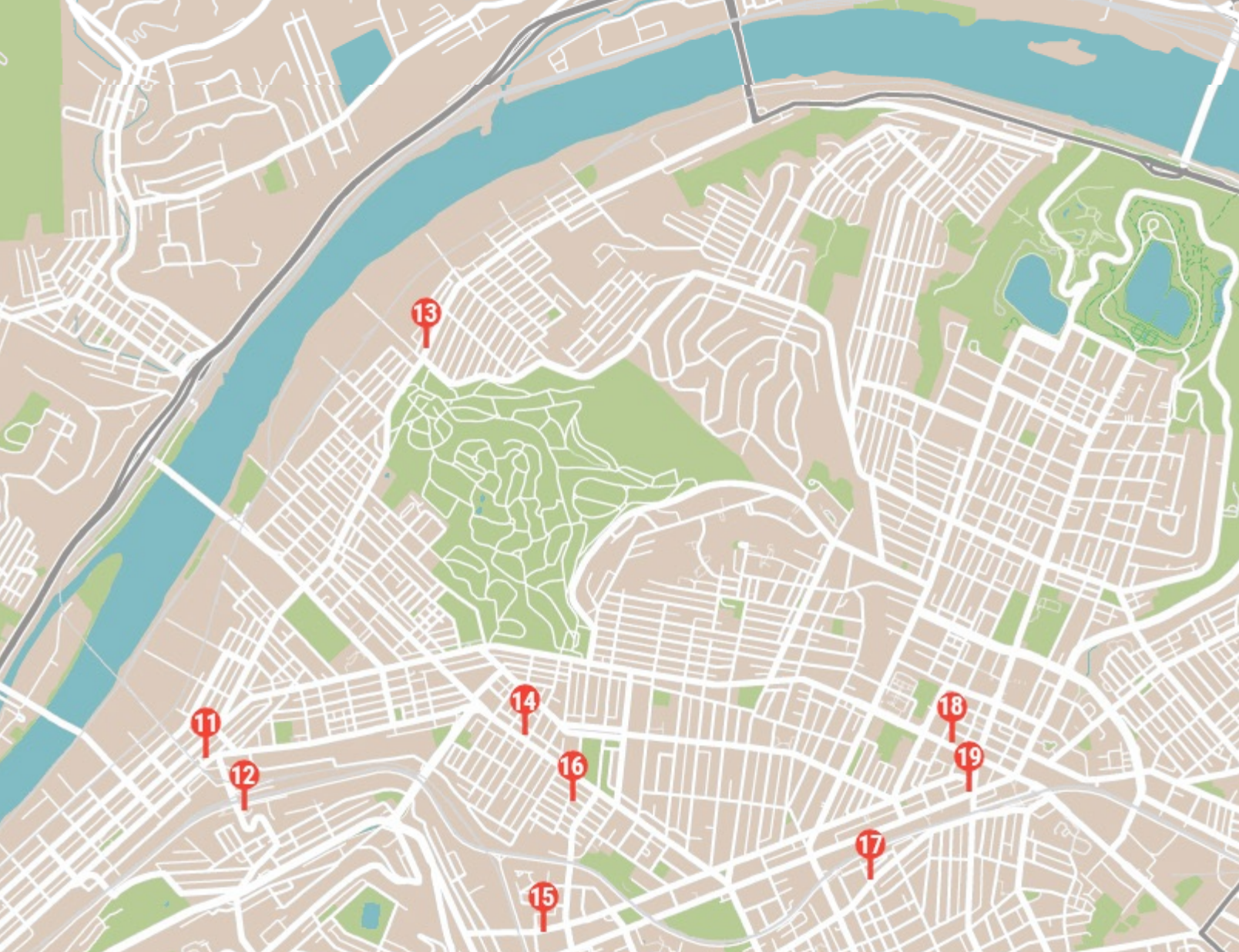


WHERE'S THE 'GAYBORHOOD'?

Visitors from other major cities may be curious where Pittsburgh's "gayborhood" or centralized area of the highest number of LGBTQ establishments and population is. While Pittsburgh does not have a formal "gayborhood" like Philadelphia or New York, the entire city is welcoming to our LGBTQ families. Shadyside, the North Side, and the Strip District are where you will find the most LGBTQ and welcoming bars, clubs, and organizations.

Check out **5801 Video Lounge's** spacious rooftop deck, **P'Town's** new back bar the "Baum Shelter", and **Blue Moon's** cozy corners. **Brewer's**, Pittsburgh's oldest gay bar, is always great to watch a game during the day or take in a drag performance at night. If you're feeling adventurous, check out **Donny's/Leather Central**, the second-floor boys and dance floor of the **Real Luck Cafe (Lucky's)**, or get a room at **Club Pittsburgh**.





ORGANIZATIONS & RESOURCES

1. **Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation**, 925 Brighton Road
3. **Proud Haven**, 517 E. Ohio Street
7. **Central Outreach Wellness Center**, 127 Anderson Street
14. **True T Studios**, 4623 Liberty Avenue
16. **Shepherd Wellness Community**, 4800 Sciota Street
18. **Allies for Health + Wellbeing**, 5913 Penn Avenue
- SisTers PGH** (not pictured), 2014 Monongahela Avenue

BARS & CLUBS

9. **Club Pittsburgh**, 1139 Penn Ave
10. **Real Luck Cafe (Lucky's)**, 1519 Penn Avenue
11. **Brewer's**, 3315 Liberty Avenue
12. **Donny's/Leather Central**, 1226 Herron Avenue
13. **Blue Moon**, 5115 Butler Street
15. **P Town**, 4740 Baum Blvd
17. **5801 Video Lounge**, 5801 Ellsworth Avenue

PRIDE EVENT LOCATIONS

2. **Allegheny Commons Park West**, 810 Arch Street. Pittsburgh Pridefest
4. **Stage AE**, 400 N Shore Drive. Pride on the Shore
5. **PNC Park**, 115 Federal Street. Pride Night with the Pirates
8. **City-County Building**, 414 Grant Street. Pride March & Parade

MORE QUEER PLACES ON QBURGH.COM/DIRECTORY



On behalf of the residents of our great city, it is my pleasure to welcome you to Pittsburgh in celebration of LGBTQIA+ Pride Month!

The celebrations that will occur over the next month embody the spirit of Pittsburgh, a city that is welcoming, diverse, and accepting of all people. Pittsburgh is home to some of our nation's most talented artists, entrepreneurs, and change-makers. We're also home to 15,000 acres of public parks and green spaces and world-class architecture. And with more than 32 museums, 30 concert venues, and 19 public libraries, our arts community rivals any other major American city. Throughout Pride Month, I encourage everyone to join in the festivities and enjoy all that Pittsburgh has to offer – from our beautiful rivers to our diverse neighborhoods.

I would like to commend QBurgh for organizing the annual Pride Guide magazine with information on all the Pride festivities, recognitions of our local community volunteers, and spotlights on many of the incredible accomplishments of Pittsburgh's LGBTQIA+ Community. Pittsburgh is a place where every member of the LGBTQIA+ community is valued for who they are and we are working hard to ensure that everyone feels safe, feels welcome, and that Pittsburgh is a city where everyone can thrive.

When we come together in celebration and solidarity we help build a city for all.

Happy Pride Pittsburgh,

A blue ink signature of Mayor Ed Gainey, written in a cursive style.

Mayor Ed Gainey
he/him/his

A colorful graphic for a Pride event. It features a beach ball, a lounge chair, a grill, and a pair of sunglasses. The text 'HUGH LANE WELLNESS FOUNDATION' is above the word 'Pride' in a large, rainbow-colored, bubbly font. Below 'Pride' is the text 'Chosen Family Cookout' in orange, 'For LGBTQ+ Youth and Families' in blue, and 'Saturday, June 25th - 925 Brighton Road' in white on a blue background. There are also Facebook and Instagram icons.

HUGH LANE
WELLNESS FOUNDATION

Pride

Chosen Family Cookout

For LGBTQ+ Youth and Families

Saturday, June 25th - 925 Brighton Road

LOVE IS KOSHER

At Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, every day is Pride Day.

Support the LGBTQ+ community in Pittsburgh!

**Join us to volunteer, to advocate, to learn,
to help people in need, and to meet great people.**

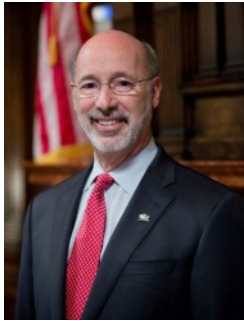


Jewish Federation
OF GREATER PITTSBURGH

jewishpgh.org
2000 Technology Dr.
Pittsburgh PA 15219
412.681.8000



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR



GREETINGS:

It is my pleasure to unite with QBurgh to welcome everyone gathered for Pittsburgh Pride Month 2022.

William Penn founded our commonwealth on the principles of fairness and tolerance, and I believe we must continue to be a place that pays faithful tribute to those core values. Together, we are creating a Pennsylvania that is committed to being an environment that supports greater diversity and inclusion for the LGBTQ community and beyond. I applaud QBurgh for continuing our founding father's legacy by advocating for LGBTQ acceptance and non-discrimination through education, social involvement, and outreach endeavors. This organization and its partners have touched the lives of many by providing resources, support, and encouragement throughout western Pennsylvania. For those attending various events throughout the month, I am proud to recognize your determination to face and overcome adversity, your commitment to breaking down barriers, and celebrating individuality. I am certain that your example of conviction, compassion, and camaraderie will inspire others for years to come.

As Governor, and on behalf of all the citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I am honored to welcome everyone to Pittsburgh Pride Month 2022. Please accept my best wishes for a memorable event and continued success.


TOM WOLF
Governor
June 2022



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



GREETINGS:

I'm honored to recognize our LGBTQIA+ community during this monthlong celebration. I'm grateful for your vital role in Pennsylvania's history, and for your efforts toward creating an inclusive and compassionate future for the commonwealth.

During this important month and all year long, we reject the hate and ignorance used to marginalize vulnerable people. No matter how you identify, you have a right to equal and fair treatment, and your elected officials have the responsibility to fight for those rights for you.

In Pennsylvania and beyond, we must continue to work together to push for anti-discrimination laws until the message is perfectly clear: no person can be treated differently than someone else just because of sexual orientation or gender identity. From our troops to our pulpits, members of the LGBTQIA+ community deserve the same protections as any American in every circumstance.

I will remain your advocate as we work toward that goal, and I will be your friend in the celebration of Pride Month. Have fun, stay proud, and stay safe.



John Fetterman
Lt. Governor
June 2022

COUNTY OF**ALLEGHENY**

Dear Friends:

It has been my great honor and privilege to offer this letter of welcome each year since my election as County Executive. During my tenure, we've seen the legalization of same sex marriage, a shift in society that has resulted in some organizations and groups becoming more welcoming to those who identify as gay, Court actions that underscore that discrimination against a person for being LGBTQ is prohibited, efforts to update policies and rules to reflect the needs of those in our community who are transgender, and more and more people who identify as LGBTQ running for and winning office to not only be the change, but lead the change that so many seek. While we've made significant strides, we also know that we have much further to go so that those in our community who identify as LGBTQ know that they have allies who will work alongside them to make our region more inclusive.

Nationally, 1 in 3 LGBTQ Americans faced discrimination of some kind in the past year, including more than 3 in 5 transgender Americans. Discrimination affects a person's mental and economic well-being. It can also mean that individuals face difficulties accessing needed medical care or postpone or avoid medical treatment altogether due to discrimination. For transgender individuals, the burden is even greater as those persons find themselves teaching their doctors about themselves so that they may receive appropriate care. It's just one of the reasons that the Allegheny County Health Department hired its first Health Equity Lead to address needs and find opportunity to address health disparities across the board. We look forward to seeing their work.

If you are experiencing discrimination, I encourage you to file a complaint with the Allegheny County Human Rights Commission. Since 2009, the Commission has worked to assure that all persons enjoy the full benefits of citizenship and are afforded equal opportunities for employment, housing and use of public accommodation facilities. These protections apply to all persons regardless of their sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation,

or many other characteristics that make our residents unique. Learn more about the Commission and its work at bit.ly/ACHRC.

As we continue to support greater diversity and inclusion, we can't let differing opinions and priorities separate us or worse, devolve into hate. We are at our best when we work together and are civil and respectful of each other, even in our differences. Through collaboration, we will continue to break down barriers, increase opportunity, celebrate our diversity, and improve the quality of life for all who call this place home.

Sincerely,

Rich Fitzgerald



Shepherd Wellness Community

*Helping people living with
HIV/AIDS improve their wellness*

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4800 Sciota Street * Pittsburgh, PA 15224

(412) 683-4477 * WWW.SWCONLINE.ORG

LETTERS OF **SUPPORT**



Dear Friends,

Welcome to Pride 2022! Each year at this time, LGBTQ+ people, along with allies, come together to celebrate the beauty and diversity of this community. This year is made even more special by the fact that, for many, it comes at a time of tentative reconnection, after a long, frightening

Covid-19 pandemic.

Over the last two years, we have seen individuals and organizations step up to support and protect LGBTQ+ people, a community that has a rich history of looking out for one another. And although those efforts were sustaining for so many, I know that there is no replacement for seeing one another's faces, for human contact and for a party! So, let's party (safely)! I hope the events in this guide give you an opportunity to comfortably rekindle old friendships, make new ones, learn something, consider your role in the world and maybe do some dancing.

I don't need to tell you that challenges for the LGBTQ+ community remain. Pennsylvania still lacks an inclusive non-discrimination law and the people of this community – particularly trans women of color – remain acutely vulnerable to hate crimes. Republican state legislators across the county, including in Pennsylvania, are pushing for abusive and damaging laws that target the healthcare and athletic participation of transgender youth.

Pride celebrations have always played an important role in the long battle for meaningful equal rights for LGBTQ+ people. For many, it's a way to replenish your spirit. Pride also brings people together, making connections and fostering the exchange of ideas. Your voices are the fuel for the movement to make this Commonwealth safer and more equal for all who live, work and play here.

So, as we begin to tiptoe toward normalcy, I hope this can be the most restorative, meaningful, fun and impactful Pride Month yet.

Happy Pride, Pittsburgh. You deserve it!

Sincerely,

Dan B. Frankel
State Representative
23rd Legislative District



UPCOMING SHOWS



MATEO LANE
DEC 2-4



JESSICA KIRSON
SEPT 16-18



ASHLEY GAVIN
OCT 14-16



MONÉT X CHANGE
JUNE 23



PITTSBURGH IMPROV
THE WATERFRONT, HOMESTEAD
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The Meaning of 'Pride'

by Jason Shavers

pride

/prɪd/noun

1. a feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements, the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired
2. consciousness of one's own dignity (Oxford Dictionaries)

That's a lovely arrangement of words, but how does that translate to your view of Pride Month? To be honest, I never really sat down and thought about it. I will admit that I took Pride events for granted for many years. When I was younger, Pride was just an excuse for me to get drunk and dance with my friends. Nothing less, nothing more. My views on Pride have changed over the years, but I still never really defined it for myself. A simple search on Google has helped me though.

1. A feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements...

Here's something to be Proud of: I have gotten this far. As a kid who found it incredibly difficult to hide that I was different, I was teased, insulted and bullied by friends, family and complete strangers. Most of the jabs (verbal or otherwise) I took came from a place of ignorance and not a place of hate, but I could not tell the difference back then. And it hurt. But I carried on. Things did get better as I got older but there were and still are road blocks that pop up simply because I am queer. But my Pride helps me navigate around those road blocks so that I can keep journeying to my best life.

...the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated...

I can only imagine what those patrons

of the Stonewall Inn were thinking and feeling on the night of June 28, 1969. I assume they were tired. Tired of being treated like they were less than human. Tired of being seen as illegal for simply existing. Tired of people trying to eradicate them only because they weren't understood. But 'tired' did not stop them. Actually, the fatigue is what fueled them to stand up and fight back. A mix of gay men, lesbians and trans people united that night to send the message that queer people do not lie down easily and deserve to live out loud just like everyone else. Over 50 years later, we owe it to those brave individuals to continue their fight for equality and to live unabashedly, not just in June but every single day of the year. Oh yes, much of my Pride comes from this knowledge.

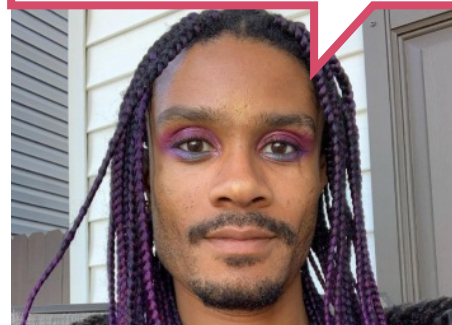
...or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired.

To put it mildly, queer people are amazing. Not only are we wildly resilient, but we are quite creative and loving and just all around fun. And that has not gone unnoticed. We have influenced entertainment and pop culture, literature, science and medicine, sports...well, the list goes on and on. Why shouldn't we celebrate that? After all, we definitely deserve it.

So there's my brief perspective on Pride. I was curious to know how others perceive Pride, so I asked some friends and here is what they had to say:

Jule Arney,
Training Manager,
Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation

"In a world that often negatively views my queerness and transness, Pride is an opportunity to defiantly celebrate the joy of being me. It's an opportunity for our community to embrace and uplift one another, to honor our elders that have created this safe space, to be the light for youth (and people of all ages) that seek to see an authentic version of themselves living fully and freely. I am proud to be Black, genderqueer, grayace, and so many other intersections of my identity, and Pride gives me and so many like me a chance to shine our light of self-love and acceptance to the rest of our community and the world!"



**Dixie Surewood,
Drag Entertainer**

“To me, Pride means being able to live out loud. Being able to not only acknowledge our queer culture, but being able to celebrate it, too!”

**Josh Engler,
Mr. Pittsburgh Leather Bear 2020**

“Pride is, first and foremost, an internal power. It’s accepting and celebrating who you are and what you want. Pride then radiates from within to your external existence as you exercise your right to celebrate those things in life that you love.”

**Stephanie Tsong,
DJ for Jellyfish**

“Pride has meant various things to me over the years. Growing up, I had always felt like an outsider to every community I encountered--not quite fully fitting in anywhere I went. As I got older and spent more time getting to know myself, I realized I lived at the intersection of multiple backgrounds and communities. After decades of finding myself outside looking in, I’ve finally found myself at home and amongst those who accept me--inside--and looking at others who’ve found a home amongst ourselves. To me, Pride means finally being able to celebrate that and to accept each others’ queer, nuanced identities.”

**Masika Lynn Mizrahi,
Drag Entertainer**

“Pride means to keep your head held high, to never doubt who you are as a person and where you’re going. You can’t change where you come from, but everyone has a choice to make it wherever they wanna be. Don’t ever let the world tell you different. Being a black trans woman has shown me the essence of truly loving and accepting myself from within, even if others don’t understand who I truly am as a person.”



2. Consciousness Of One’s Own Dignity

I did find that there were many similarities in my definition of Pride and my friends’ definitions. We all agree that Pride is about knowing who we are and owning it in our own way. But the truth is there is no one right way to celebrate your Pride. Want to attend Pride On The Shore? Go ahead. Want to volunteer for a LGBTQIA organization? Feel free. Want to bombard the legislators coming up with these anti-gay and anti-trans bills with messages about how they are harming the queer youth of today and that it ultimately won’t work? PLEASE DO.

Whether your Pride is as small and as strong as a mustard seed or as big and as colorful as a parade float, it does not matter. What matters is knowing where we came from, knowing where we’re headed, and that despite others’ many attempts to destroy us, knowing that we’re not going down without a fight. Then you can take it from there. From the bottom of my heart, I wish all of you a Happy Pride! 🌈



A Mother's Pride

by Drew Praskovich



I've never been to a Pride parade. I've never danced in the street in June, my arms open wide and swirling like a technicolor tornado. Rainbow is one of my least favorite colors. Those stark, saturated colors induce a bit of panic. Does this make me less gay? Or even more gay because I'm being finicky about a color palette? This eye for color and cohesion comes from my graphic designer mom. I spent so many hours in the backseat of her white Mitsubishi Galant flipping through the pages of her heavy design reference books absorbing the aesthetics wonders on the glossy pages. After days at work, she'd bring home mockup sheets with dozens of variations on the same logo. Mom always let me give some input. She knew I understood the big difference small decisions could make.

Parades were a constant in my childhood. With each season there would be another to attend: strutting in the Halloween parade, shivering in the March snow as my dad played bagpipes in the Saint Patrick's Day Parade, dashing into the street for stray tootsie rolls at the Memorial Day parade. Mom was by my side at all of these. Our arms filled with the folding chairs and scratchy baja blanket she always kept her trunk, meandering down the street until we found a solid curb on which to stake our claim. Waving American flags, catching beads flung from back seat beauty queens, spritzing our sweaty faces with the mist of a water bottle/fan combo. But in June? We didn't go to any parades.

Mom and I developed lots of rituals and traditions beyond parades. Our most sacred was spending nights at Red Robin when my dad was at work.

"I think we get a free burger this time," she'd say as she flashed her plastic Loyalty Card.

We cruised down the Parkway with the sweet, greasy memories of steak fries flashing through our minds. There were times throughout high school we'd be there more than once a week. Instead of hanging out with my friends on a Friday, I relished

in our little ceremony. We'd catch a movie or stop by Barnes and Noble to flip through magazines together while sipping on Starbucks.

By college, these mother-son excursions mostly ended. I was busy with classes and a boyfriend. My phone dinged every so often. Red Robin tonight? A simple text with a wide smile emoji. I ignored the message or sent a hasty can't tonight or maybe next week. No emojis. My boyfriend, who has a lovingly close relationship with his mom, started to feel bad for mine. He urged me to say yes the next time she asked.

It's not that I didn't want to hang out with my mom, but we entered a vague territory. She liked my boyfriend and they got along well, but it was the small things I noticed. She never introduced him to anyone as my boyfriend. Rather, "And, uh, this is... this is Steve!". And maybe that's my fault. I'm the one who brought Steve over one night for a Sunday dinner. I never called him my boyfriend, but I just kept bringing him over again and again to my parents' weekly Sunday dinners. I am the only gay man in my family, so I never had a blueprint for how to navigate all this new territory. Things were stilted and cyclical. I felt cringey speaking about my relationship with her, and then felt closed off when she spent most of the time talking about religion and saints she was obsessed with. Steve was right. I should be a good son.

The next time she messaged, I responded with every emoji ever. Unicorn, balloon, hamburger, salsa dancer, heart eyes. Burger night was on. Even in 2018, the restaurant hadn't changed since our last visit. The same nostalgic, tchotchke-filled decor. The menus were redesigned (mom couldn't help but to notice) yet still perpetually sticky.

"I think I have a free burger on the card."

"You say that every time."

We placed our orders and snatched sugar packets to play table hockey. According to our ancient rules, loser paid for

the onion ring tower. The Sweet & Low soared back and forth across the booth. Our conversation was tepid and aimless. With a slick flick of the finger, mom scored another point and cleared her throat. "I've been working on this new project at work."

"What is it?" I had accepted the fact I would be paying for the onion rings.

"They're looking for designers to help with Thermo Fisher's Pride celebration stuff."

My body slipped back into high school suspicion mode. I felt like I was back in the car the time she almost pushed through and asked me the big question outright. Tears were in her eyes, the "G" hanging in the back of her throat. She was panicking because my aunt had found suspicious pills tucked in between clothes piled on my desk. She told my mom and sister, who started to spiral thinking my good performance at school was all because I was addicted to Adderall. The stack of clothes wasn't even mine. They were my dad's and the pills were his gross men's multivitamins.

Her pill breakdown broke down her walls and everything was one burst away from cascading down. I wanted to hear her say the word so badly, to finally puncture the balloon that wouldn't stop growing in my heart. She couldn't do it. Neither could I.

"Oh, that's cool." Stupid answer. I was intrigued but didn't want to come off as too congratulatory. It was a similar feeling to when someone tells you they know a gay person and that they want to set you up. Did my mom think I instantly cared about everything that was gay? She's trying to connect with you Drew, be grateful. All I wanted was for her to talk to me like the Drew I always was and still am. I assumed coming out would have eliminated the invisible barrier between us. It didn't make it disappear, but finally made the barrier clear to see.

"The float I've come up with is awesome. I submitted a design for the t-shirts to wear during the march and everyone loves them."

"Sounds fun."

"I can show you some pictures!"

She pulled out her phone as the server dropped off the baskets of our food. The moment faded. Mom brought me here to our special place to share something she thought I would care about, and I sloughed it off. I treated her small act like it was meaningless to me. I wanted to share all the contradictions I was feeling. Tell her Don't you realize a reason I don't deserve the happiness of that parade is because of you? Or ask Do you want to go to Pride together? Instead, I took a bite of my hamburger. It didn't taste the same.

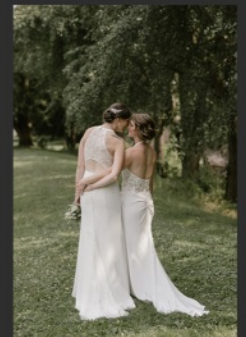
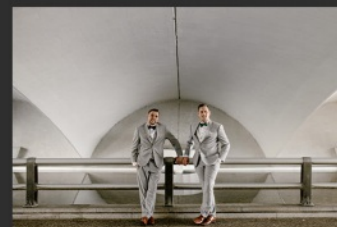
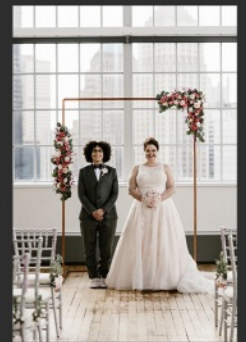
The next time we saw each other was at Sunday dinner and then the one after that. Over and over, the weeks blended and pushed me through the end of the spring semester and into summer. She gave me snippets of updates. How she wanted the balloons to look molecular and atomic. Vibrant and exuberant. My responses still came off as indifferent, uncaring. Something within me locked, and I couldn't break free from it.

My mother would happily say she's proud to have me as her son, but I don't know if she could say she is proud



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to have a gay son. It's not that she is malicious or hateful. My mom is gentle and observant. To her, the adjective feels limiting like I've put myself in a box. A box that complicates her desire for me to be a faithful, Catholic boy. I don't need to be a PFLAG torchbearer, but I don't want to feel minimized in my own family. Around the people I love most. I guess it stings, but it's something I understand I must let go. I can't live my life waiting for that validation from her. This validation is something I must find, nurture, and celebrate within myself.

A June morning. I woke up snuggled in Steve's arms. The cats pawed at us overtop the duvet, desperate for a pet. We do this goofy thing on holidays where we turn to one another and hold direct eye contact and wish each other an ironic greeting dripping with sincerity. Steve looked at me with his blue eyes and whispered, "Happy Pride, Drew."

"Happy Pride, Steve." I checked my phone. We slept in until late in the afternoon. I had a few missed calls from my sister and mom. Nothing out of the ordinary for me. My phone is on do not disturb 24/7 because notification make me anxious. I checked a text from my sister first. Mom really wanted to see you this morning. I rolled my eyes. I opened a text from my mom and saw the float she had helped create, the buildings of Downtown rising in the background. Turned out really good! Wide smile emoji. Her favorite.

"What is it?" Steve asked.

"Nothing, nothing," I locked my phone. I didn't want know Steve I was playing the ignore game again. He would be the wise one and make me respond and offer kindness to my mom. I avoided. It's what I know best. "Whaddya wanna do today?"

I spent the day prowling through Facebook and Instagram. The timelines were filled with Pride snapshots. Friends in sunglasses and bright colors, their smiles beaming down Liberty Ave. I found a group of people wearing the t-shirt my mom designed. I was impressed.

I remembered her telling me she didn't want to do something too obvious or

expected. Her design was simplistic and fit the brand of a scientific instrument and software corporation. The shirt was a riff on the periodic table. A single square centered on soft, gray cotton. The square wasn't outlined in white, but multicolor. It didn't feel rainbow, but like a sleek, illuminated visible light spectrum. Inside was the symbol, "Pd" and underneath "Pride." There were numbers in the top left and right corners of the square. 628 and 1970. June 28th, 1970. The date of the first gay liberation march to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising. Underneath the square of Pride was a simple phrase, "It's elemental."

I couldn't help thinking about my mom researching all of this to inspire her and inform her decisions. What did she feel when she read about Marsha P. Johnson, of Sylvia Rivera, of horrific police brutality? Maybe she didn't focus on anything except the number she needed and clicked out of the page. I'm frustrated she learned this history through a lifeless screen, rather than through me. I should have used that Red Robin date as a great moment for me to share my knowledge, my heart, my pride in our shared history. I wished I was wearing one of the shirts next to her, posted to the feed, so everyone could see the two of us.

The next day, another Sunday dinner. We all ate outside on the patio.

"I really loved the shirts," I said.

"Everyone was very happy with them. I thought they looked really good, too."

"Tell me about the parade?" I asked, and it hit me that my mom had been to a Pride parade before I have.

"Oh, I just stopped down to do some finishing touches on the float and then left before they started marching."

"I see."

"Why does everyone have to run around and dance in nothing but their underwear?"

The classic, cheap cliché. I doubted that the corporate sponsored Pittsburgh Pride was filled with guys in Andrew Christians before 11 a.m. I sighed, "That's not what it's about. And plus, what does

it matter to you if people are?"

"I just think it's a bit much."

I took my plate inside and washed it in the sink. Avoid. My sister approached with her own.

"Mom did all that for you."

"Make dinner?"

"Shut up, you know what I mean."

"Yeah. Okay. And?"

"She just wished you were there to support her. She wanted to make you happy."

"Me support her?" I huffed. "There's always next year." I ran up to the bathroom. Exiting another conversation. I stared at myself in the mirror I watched myself grow up in.

I wished my mom would have just told me her feelings about how much she wanted me there at the parade. Open dialogue has never been our strong suit. Every time I write something that mentions our relationship, she always lets me know after she reads it that she isn't great with words like I am. She thinks I'll judge her for not being eloquent and articulate. Mom sees me as her brainiac baby who set his own bedtime in grade school so he could have an hour of down time before sleeping to read his chapter books. I want her to know that talking is hard for me too, and that's why I turn to a blank Word document. Mom, even though I write, I'm silent when I do.

The language my mother has given me is that of creativity. It's how we both express ourselves most clearly and happily. It's something invaluable. An immeasurable gift of the soul. Is this how I can make you proud, mom? My writing is how I force myself to not avoid my feelings or you.

When I see a Pride flag waving, I shouldn't think of the rainbow. But how it, too, was designed with meaning, with intention, a creative eye. Each color, a symbol. Sex, life, healing, sunlight, nature, magic, serenity, and spirit. Maybe we will never march together, but I know we can still find something beautiful to share. 



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Long may
they reign

by Michael Buzzelli



Royalty

Drag queens are lip-synching all over the 'Burgh these days, with oodles of brunches, bingos, pageants and happy hours to fill your Google Calendar. Regarding the burgeoning drag scene, Phoenix Fatale said, "You can't throw a pump without hitting two drag queens before it lands in a pile of glitter around here."

Phoenix Fatale holds the title of Ms. Blue Moon, the bar's tenth reigning queen. Fatale is not the only title holder reigning on the Pittsburgh stages. Trista Storm, who was recently crowned Ms. P Town, said, "Pittsburgh is a wonderful place for performers. It's diverse."

Dixie Sherwood, who has held multiple titles over the years, including Miss PA Trash 2016, Miss Blue Moon 2018, Miss Tristate's Comedy Queen 2016, Miss Greats Lakes Comedy Queen 2017 and

National Miss Comedy Queen in 2018, said, "Unlike other cities, Pittsburgh has a ton of spaces for all kind of art! Drag has become mainstream in the past few years, and Pittsburgh has embraced it."

The queens are all in, but soft boy offered a slightly alternative perspective. The drag king, whose signature color is pink, found flaws in Pittsburgh's scene, but remained optimistic. The pink performer said, "Pittsburgh certainly has the potential to be a great place for drag, and things are heading in the right direction. But there's a lot of improvement needed when it comes to diversity and holding people accountable for problematic behavior. That being said, there's a good community of performers who are really trying to make a difference and provide opportunity and space."

Leia Way LeStat, the reigning Pennsylvania Queen of Beauty Plus 2022-2023, agrees with soft boy. LeStat, the former Miss Steel City Softball 2018 and Miss P Town 2019-2021, said, "We need more visibility and opportunities for our trans entertainers and kings."

For many, like Trista Storm, drag is not a job, but a passion.

Trista Storm said, "Drag is a miracle. People find themselves. It's therapeutic."

For some, it's the thrill of competition. Leia Way LeStat came to drag in an unconventional manner. The performer started doing drag for a charity event for the Steel City Softball League. It was just supposed to be a one-time thing, but LeStat placed as first runner up. Leia Way LeStat said, "I don't like to lose."



Calipso,
Ms. Pennsylvania Queen
of Beauty 2022

LeStat came back two years in a row to win the title. The pageant queen said, "Once I won, people in the community started booking me for things. They were impressed by my stage presence and talent." It was all the encouragement LeStat needed. The performer added, "I kinda just stuck with it."

In July, Leia Way LeStat is heading to Puerto Rico for the National Queen of Beauty with hopes of bringing the title back to Pittsburgh. Another local queen, Calipso, recently named Pennsylvania Miss Queen Of Beauty, is preparing to head to Puerto Rico to compete in that competition.

Calipso started doing drag three years ago, but, in that brief time, has become a full-time entertainer. Calipso said, "Growing up in Venezuela, I just didn't have that kind of opportunity. I was always told to not act a certain way or not to move my hands like a girl and to start acting more masculine. When I moved to the states and found out drag was a possibility it was a game changer for me."

Calipso added, "Besides being the way I make a living, it's also my 



Phoenix Fatale,
Miss Blue Moon 2022

passion. It is my way to reclaim who I was trying to be growing up: Myself!”

While gay bars like 5801 still host them, brunch has branched out of the clubs and into more mainstream venues. Lola LaCroix hosts an event at the Hard Rock Cafe in Station Square, Vyvyan Vyxn is at Black Dog Wine Company and Luna Skye and Indie Skies hold court at the New Amsterdam in Lawrenceville and Trace Brewing in Bloomfield.

After Covid hit, Indie Skies and Luna Skye lost their day jobs. Today, the duo, who are romantic partners and business partners, are the two full time drag divas running S & S Productions. Indie Skies, who is of Native American descent (Lakota, an Indigenous people of the Great Plains), has been performing drag for 12 years. Indie Skies, Ohio National Showgirl 2022 and Ms. Erie

2021, will be competing in the National Showgirl pageant in Orlando, Florida.

Luna Skye (the other S in S&S productions) has only been performing for three years but talked about how their company is expanding with exciting new venues including performances at Primanti Brothers, a Yinzer institution.

Trista Storm said, “I love the theatricality of it all. The costumes, the makeup and the hair. Drag is my drug. When I walk out onto the stage and see the audience everything else melts away.”

For many young kings and queens, Pittsburgh may be a safe, inclusive space to don their gay apparel and sissy that walk. Trista Storm said, “The drag scene is thriving. It’s time to take the reins and go!” 🌈



Catching Up with Pittsburgh’s First Lady of Drag

Kierra Darshell, Pittsburgh’s first lady of drag, runs the Miss Tri-State Newcomer competition. This year, Lady Inferno Diamond picked up that crown.

Kierra Darshell has been bringing sass and class to the drag scene since the late 80s. Kierra Darshell hosted the Miss Tri-State All-Star Pageant, Pittsburgh’s biggest drag competition for over twenty-five years. Kierra began the event in 1992, back before “RuPaul’s Drag Race” became must-watch TV.

Pittsburgh’s first lady of drag took sashes and tiaras out of the gay bars and began displaying the talents of drag performers from Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia in more august settings. Kierra Darshell said, “I started it at a ballroom in Monroeville and we moved downtown to the Cabaret in Theater Square. We never did it in a bar.”

While the Tri-State All-Star Pageant ended in 2017, Kierra Darshell still runs the Miss Tri-State All-Star Newcomer Pageant as well as a Mr. Tri-State All-Star Pageant, a competition dedicated to masculine beauty and the male form.

Kierra Darshell created the Miss Tri-State All-Star Pageant with her friend Denise Darshell. Kierra Darshell said, “Denise was unable to enter competitions at the time, because, back in the day, you had to be a boy queen to compete. There

was a stigma that trans people had an unfair advantage in competitions. Denise and I wanted to open the pageant up to anyone who wanted in.”

After the first year, Denise Darshell passed away. When Kierra visited her in the hospital, Denise said, “Girl, you’ve got to keep this pageant going!” And she did for twenty-five years.

Her friend and performer the Legendary Misty Knight helped out on the Miss Tri-State All-Star Pageant. “The Legendary Misty Knight was with me from the beginning. She died of lung cancer five months after the final show.”

Kierra Darshell said, “Drag is very big in Pittsburgh.” She added, “It’s a very open-minded city. I was doing a street festival [Southside Works Exposed] for fourteen years and it would be packed. Everyone would congregate around and watch me perform. The promoters of the Southside Works Exposed said I was a draw!”

Kierra Darshell brought drag brunch to Pittsburgh. The performer began dressing up for breakfast on Sundays at the James Street Tavern on the Northside. Before the James Street Tavern closed its doors in 2017.

Aside from running the two pageants, Kierra Darshell has also partnered with Barons of Steel, a leather club, to resurrect the Tea Dance, the original Sunday Funday, a rotating the event bouncing around Pittsburgh’s gay bars. Kierra and her go-go boys could be coming to a bar near you.

Kierra said, “I started performing in the late 80s and I never stopped.”





Indie Skies and Luna Skye



Dixie Surewood



Trista Storm, Miss P Town 2022



Leia Way LeStat,
Miss PA Queen
of Beauty
Plus 2022



soft boy



Lady-Inferno Diamond,
Miss Tri-State Newcomer 2022

View the full drag photoshoot at
[QBurgh.com/reign](https://qburgh.com/reign)



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Join us June 2nd–12th as we celebrate 10 Days of Pride at 5801. Events to benefit The Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation and other local organizations. Details coming soon.

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LYNDSEY SICKLER

PRIDE HERO

by Roy Gloeckl

**This is a story of love and compassion
only heroes can tell.**





“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’” - Mr. Rogers

You’re probably familiar with that famous Fred Rogers quote.

It feels like things have been scary for a long time, especially for LGBTQ+ people, so helpers are needed now more than ever but how do we make sure they know how much they are appreciated?

Lyndsey Sickler (they/them) is a born helper, serving our community for over 25 years.

Who is this Lyndsey Sickler? Well, as they put it, they identify as a nonbinary femme, trans, queer, pagan, polyamorous, fat, body-positive community advocate for the transgender, lesbian, bisexual, gay, queer, intersex, asexual, two-spirit, and HIV-positive community, in and around Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Lyndsey’s journey as a helper began at the age of 9, running the household, taking care of their ailing mother, and beating ovarian cancer as a teenager. In 1991, they moved from New Jersey to Pennsylvania and attended Turkeyfoot Valley High School. “I have always been a volunteer. When I was in high school I helped with my brother’s baseball team, selling raffle tickets and working the concession stand. I played basketball and softball, I was in the band, I was class president, I was in Spanish club and, for a short stint, Bible club,” Lyndsey laughs. “I was involved in everything and that didn’t change once I got to college.” Chatham College, to be specific,



where they studied Psychology and Studio Art, while also volunteering with the University of Pittsburgh’s Youth Empowerment Project. Upon graduating in 1999, Lyndsey became the project coordinator for Pitt’s program, empowering young adult participants to become HIV/AIDS peer prevention specialists, while also advocating for queer adolescent health issues, and organizing youth events.

“I would go down to Pegasus and do HIV testing and all of that. I became known as ‘the condom lady. I would be out on a date and someone would come up and ask me for a condom,” Lyndsey says. “My friends joked that

they always knew where to find me because there would be a trail of condoms behind me but I like that people feel safe approaching me.”

Eventually Lyndsey became involved with the Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Pittsburgh (now known as the Pittsburgh Equality Center), serving on the board, then as co-chair and finally chair of the board, until 2016. They also spent 16 years in the role of Youth Programs Manager before becoming the Executive Director of Proud Haven, an organization that offers safe



“For these young folks, I am trying to be the person that I didn’t have growing up. I didn’t have someone to tell me that it was ok to be weird or different and that it didn’t make me bad.”

shelter for LGBTQ+ youth, ages 18-25, experiencing homelessness. "For these young folks, I am trying to be the person that I didn't have growing up. I didn't have someone to tell me that it was ok to be weird or different and that it didn't make me bad."

You would think that is enough to fill one's day but Lyndsey also co-founded Hot Metal Hardware, a troupe that provides safe space for gender performance, expansion, and exploration to all, and TransPride Pittsburgh, an annual multi-day celebration full of entertaining events and thought-provoking conferences. That Pride event actually began as a simple picnic for members of the trans community to get together but it soon evolved to include much more.

"People just kept asking for more stuff," Lyndsey says. This led to group outings to shows, outdoor events, and a talent showcase, which included talk-backs, where people would share their experiences living as trans. These post-show discussions became an afternoon of trans-led workshops, which soon became an entire day, before eventually catching the attention of some people at UPMC.

"They wanted to collaborate to create better cultural competency and advocacy around trans care," Lyndsey says. "We've just continued to build from there to where we're at now, which is a full three day conference, the TransPride Pgh Health & Wellness Conference" (Mark your calendars, this year's conference will be held October 6-8).

To Lyndsey, Pride events are more than a parade or concert. "There are people every year that I meet that say something like, 'This is the first time I'm meeting another gay person,'" Lyndsey says. "Pride is not just a party, it is about gathering our community together and showing each other that we exist. For young

people, especially, it is really something that can change their lives, seeing our community thriving, living their lives, being human beings and not just some caricatures of themselves that they might see in the media."

You may have heard of compassion fatigue, emotional and physical exhaustion that leads to a diminished ability to empathize with others, often referred to as the "negative cost of caring." It is very common in service roles like social workers, therapists, and librarians, so how does Lyndsey avoid the dreaded empathy burnout?

"I do art, I paint watercolors, resin art, I'm also teaching myself digital drawing," Lyndsey says. Art also helps them continue to process the loss of their mother, who passed in 2013. "I'm working on self-acceptance and being aware of the kind of language I use on myself. If I say something negative internally, I'm like, 'would I say that to one of my kids? No? Then stop it!'" Creating healthy boundaries like turning off their phone for a while or leaving work at the workplace also helps with Lyndsey's self care regimen.

"My whole life is around people who are very queer and trans affirming so I want that kind of experience for everybody, I don't want anyone to feel left out. That is why I do what I do even if, sometimes, it is a lot."

So, how can we be more like Lyndsey? What is their advice for getting involved and making a difference in the community? Actively looking for ways to volunteer is great but make sure you follow up. "We're all underfunded and overworked so if you write to someone about helping out and you don't hear back, reach out again. You are not annoying," Lyndsey says. "Being consistent and persistent in your pursuit of volunteer and support activities is very helpful." If you don't have time to be involved

at that level, donations are always welcome and even simply clicking that share button on social media can help charitable organizations out.

"It makes me happy to help people. It is not a burden to me because I want to help. It is what is in my heart to do."

Lyndsey, we speak on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community of Pittsburgh when we say, THANK YOU.



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YOUR PRIDE ITINERARY

June 2

Too Hot for July:

Pride with Saucy Santana

Kick-off Pride in style with AIDS Free Pittsburgh and True T PGH at the Klvn Coffee Lab, 6600 Hamilton Avenue. Expect vogue battles with cash money prizes, free HIV testing, and more.

June 3

Ball on the Bridge

Join the Pittsburgh Pride Group and the Pittsburgh Ballroom Council for the 3rd Ball on the Bridge - Rainbow Games on the iconic Andy Warhol Bridge. 12:00pm to 4:00pm. Cash prizes in over 10 categories



June 3

Pride on the Shore **Stage AE, North Shore**

Featuring Jessie J on the main stage! Free pre-show with Pittsburgh's Royalty, drag queens and kings starts at 4:00pm. Ticketed main stage concert also features Monique Heart, PENNYWILD, Raye, and VINCINT. Ticketed afterparty with TRIXIE MATTEL. Portion of proceeds benefit Proud Haven, for LGBTQ youth. Tickets at PrideOnTheShorePGH.com. More details on Page 40.

June 4

Pittsburgh Pride **Revolution March** **and Parade**

We will all march together as a community! Line up and speakers being at 11 AM at the City-County Building, 414 Grant Street. Step off at noon. This is the 50th Pittsburgh Pride march! Bring your flags and your signs!

June 4

Pittsburgh Pride **Revolution Festival**

Get ready for Miss Money! The 2022 Pridefest will be held in Allegheny Commons Park West, known as West Park, near the Pittsburgh Aviary. Featuring community vendors, TWO stages with performances by Venus de Mars, All the Pretty Horses (EPK) and headlined by Pittsburgh's own Miss Money! **FREE**

June 5

Pittsburgh Pride **Revolution MiniFestival** **@ Trace Brewing**

Wrap up the Pride weekend with a festival in Bloomfield at Trace Brewing 3:00pm to 9:00pm with special guests including All the Pretty Horses (EPK).

Find more details and maps
on QBurgh.com/Pride





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June 5

People's Pride Swissvale

SisTers PGH will host the People's Pride PGH Swissvale Pride 2022 from 10am until 9pm on Sunday, June 5th. Hosted annually by SisTers PGH, the event is to help uplift the TGNC (Trans and Gender-nonconforming) community of Allegheny County.

The focus of this year's pride event will be improving Swissvale legislation, police training, advocacy and inclusivity.

June 9

Fox Chapel Pride in the Park

A family-friendly gathering to unite the LGBTQIA+ community in the Fox Chapel Area. Allies welcome. Allegheny Rover Trail Park. More info at fcprideinthepark.com.

June 11

Washington, PA Pride

The Washington County Pride will be held on Saturday, June 11th starting at 12pm Noon via the Main Street Pavillion in Washington, PA. For further information, patrons are encouraged to email prideinfo@washpapride.com.

June 12

Pride in Crafton

Featuring a parade and picnic with entertainment in the park. Follow Pride in Crafton on Facebook for up-to-date information as it becomes available.

June 18

Millvale Pride

Head to the historic Millvale Business District on Saturday, June 18th from 12pm until 8pm for a day long celebration of the LGBTQIA+ community. Events that will be included live music, food and drink specials, artisan fair, face painting, games & giveaways, along with queer performances from members of the community.

June 18

Mt. Lebanon Pride

Save the date. Check QBurgh.com for event updates as they become available.

June 25

Dormont Spark/Pride

Join Dormont Arts and the Dormont LGBTQ Community Committee, a project of the Dormont Community Development Corporation, for a one-of-a-kind FREE event that will provide an afternoon of visual arts, featured in local businesses, LGBT-friendly entertainment, music, vendors, food, and much more to our community.

July 23 - 24

Ohio Valley Pride

Since 2017, founder Jack Carbasho noticed that the Ohio Valley needed to have an LGBTQIA+ festival, thus the birth of the Ohio Valley Pride Festival. For the 2022 Pride Season, OVP has thus changed their dates to now be held on July 23rd and 24th, 2022.

July 28 - 31

Pittsburgh Black Pride

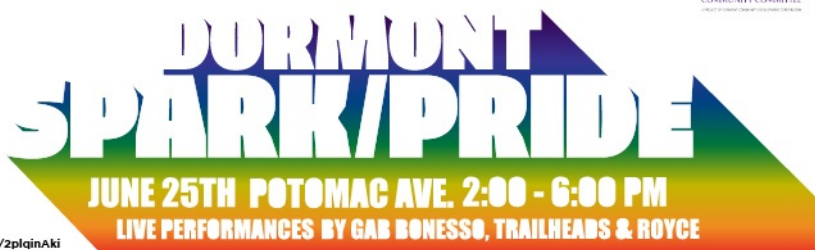
A weekend? How about a weeklong celebration – Pittsburgh Black Pride will celebrate Pride Season from Thursday, July 28th through Sunday, July 31st, 2022, kicking off the celebration on 6:00pm. 



PRIDE, ARTS, AND MUSIC FESTIVAL



<https://fb.me/e/2plqinAki>



MORE PRIDE EVENT DETAILS ON QBURGH.COM/EVENTS

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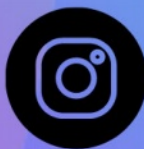
3 Day Emergency Hotel Stay

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Youth Drop In

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www.proudhaven.org





P*TOWN

Pride 2022

Friday, June 3rd - Rainbow GLOW Party

DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY TO THE SOUNDS OF

DJ WINSTON T

PARTY STARTS AT 10PM!



DJ WINSTON
T

Saturday, June 4th - Pride Party!

FEATURING MALE LEAD: MYKUL J VALENTINE!

PERFORMANCES BY: BLADE - VICTORIA - J CITI - GEORGIA BEA WITH A

SPECIAL PERFORMANCE BY NEWLY CROWNED MISS P*TOWN PRIDE!

DRAG SHOW 11PM



OUTDOOR PRIDE MARKET: CHECK OUT MERCHANDISE FROM QUEER VENDORS AND LOCAL DESIGNERS

Sunday, June 5th - Tea Dance!

HOSTED BY BARONS OF STEEL

PERFORMANCES BY MYKUL J VALENTINE AND LOCAL TALENT

PARTY STARTS AT 4PM!!!

4740 BAUM BLVD; PITTSBURGH, PA 15213





Pride in your Health

by Aaron Valentic

Over forty years since the discovery of HIV/AIDS, many have anxiously waited for new advancements in healthcare technology that could help alleviate, if not eradicate these infectious diseases. From medications like AZT in the 1990s, PrEP in the 2000s, a new generation of medicine are making their way into the forefront of healthcare to help those prevent infection and treat those living with HIV/AIDS.

One of the latest advancements to come into 2022 has been the introduction of Apretude (also known clinically as Cabotegravir). Apretude, is a bi-monthly injectable PrEP option (such as Descovy or Truvada), that takes away the stress of having to take a pill daily, along with the frantic notions of forgetting.

“Today’s approval adds an important tool in the effort to end the HIV epidemic by providing the first option to prevent HIV that does not involve taking a daily pill,” Dr. Debra Birnkrant, the director of antivirals division at the FDA’s Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, said in a statement via NBC News.

“This injection, given every two months, will be critical to addressing the HIV epidemic in the U.S., including helping high-risk individuals and certain groups where adherence to daily medication has been a major challenge or not a realistic option.”

With regards to the pill form of PrEP, it can reduce the risk of getting HIV from sex by as much as 99 percent, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (though noted by the CDC that it is much less effective when it is not taken as prescribed).

The injectable drug, Apretude, is given first as two injections one month apart and then once every two months. It was approved for use in “at-risk” adults and adolescents weighing at least 77 pounds. Recipients are required to test negative for HIV before starting the drug and before each injection “to reduce the risk of developing drug resistance,” the FDA said via The Washington Post.

“People who are vulnerable to acquiring HIV, especially those in Black and Latinx communities who are

disproportionately impacted in the US, may want options beyond daily oral pills...Apretude was studied in one of the most diverse and comprehensive HIV prevention trial programs to date, which also included some of the largest numbers of transgender women and Black men who have sex with men ever enrolled in an HIV prevention trial”, stated Deborah Waterhouse, ViiV Healthcare’s CEO.

In 2020, about one in four of the 1.2 million people for whom PrEP is recommended were prescribed it. The CDC estimates that as of 2019, there were approximately 285,000 people using PrEP, many of them gay and bisexual men.

For anyone that is one the go, Apretude brings a new found freedom to preventative care that allows you to be in control of how and when you take your medicine. 🌈



Pride Stars

The volunteers who make us proud 365 days a year.

QBurgh has launched the Pride Star Awards for Pride 2022 to celebrate the volunteers and community members that help make all of our organizations possible. The Pride Star Award is designed to acknowledge the many valuable contributions being made by our volunteers in our local community who receive no or little compensation for their hard work and dedication. The award is also meant to increase awareness of the importance of volunteering, especially in the LGBTQ communities. The winners were chosen by their own organizations.

Thank you to all our community volunteers



OUTRAGEOUS BINGO

RICK ALLISON

Rick Allison was awarded for his work on OUTrageous Bingo. Rick has been the force behind and the face of OUTrageous Bingo for 25 years. His efforts have produced critical funds for the Shepherd Wellness Community and the Pittsburgh Equality Center, (formerly the Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Pittsburgh). In addition to being the caller for the games, Rick does many tasks behind the scenes to make each bingo a success.

GAY 4 GOOD PGH

**NATHAN
GRIJALVA**

Nathan was awarded for his volunteer work with Gay 4 Good Pittsburgh. Nathan Grijalva is a business intelligence developer for UPMC. He is originally from Augusta, GA, but has been in Pittsburgh since 2010 and has volunteered with G4G since 2012. Nathan says he volunteers to take his mind off of his own concerns and that giving back to his community is something he finds incredibly rewarding.

“It’s one thing to live in a community but it’s a totally different thing to directly contribute to that community. We do a lot of revitalization projects throughout the city and it’s such a pleasure to see the tangible impact we have.” Nathan also enjoys what he gets back from volunteering.

“Coming from rural GA, I never felt like I was truly part of a community before and G4G really has given me that. Pittsburgh has become home for me and I look forward to continuing giving back.”



HUGH LANE WELLNESS FOUNDATION

**TERRY
HUDON**

Terry Hudon was awarded by the Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation for traveling over 6,500 miles delivering food for Hugh’s Kitchen. Terry is a Vietnam Navy Veteran. Terry comes from a family of volunteers. “My mother and sister were very active. My mother always said, ‘you get back what you give out’, and that is what drives me to give my time to others. When people say they don’t know what they would do without food from Hugh Lane, it really makes it all worth it. All I have to do is give a little of my time and it makes such an impact, and makes me more thankful for the life I have.”





STEEL CITY VOLLEYBALL

MATTHEW KRAMAR

Matthew says that he didn't choose Steel City Volleyball, but that SCVL chose him. "Since moving to Pittsburgh almost ten years ago, SCVL has been one of the few constants for me. Right after I moved, a colleague and member of SCVL brought me along to experience the league, and I was ready to sign up immediately because I saw the unique environment SCVL promotes. This league welcomed me very quickly at a time where I was new to the city and I didn't know many people at all." Matthew says volunteering at Steel City Volleyball has enriched his life. "Seeing players smiling and having a good time week-to-week each Sunday is the pinnacle of my weekend. It's so important to remember that the league would not be what it is today without the strength and drive of all the hard-working volunteers over the years that have shaped SCVL into what it has become today. Volunteering as a Board member feels so fulfilling even after 9 years!"

REEL Q NICK SMERKER

Nick Smerker was awarded for volunteering with Reel Q for over 4 years. They said "The festival would not be the same without Nick's steady guidance." Nick has been living in Pittsburgh for the last nine years and works in higher education. He supports students creating short documentaries, PSAs, and podcasts. He volunteers because he likes to keep busy and share his skills with others.

"I'm fascinated by storytelling, particularly from lesser known communities and am drawn to the international short films that Reel Q brings to our local queer community as well as all of the other programming throughout the year. Working with Reel Q has given me an opportunity to screen so many fascinating films, help to shape festival programs and to publicize film screenings and other community opportunities via the website. It's rewarding work and I enjoy doing it."



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WED: 10-6
THURS: 10-8 (Tool Library 6-8)
FRI: 10-2
SAT: 10-6 (Tool Library 10-5)

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REEL Q

Reel Q produces events and film screenings throughout the year, not only during its annual festival, while also aiming to increase the availability and accessibility of queer film in Pittsburgh and the surrounding region, highlighting the diverse experiences of the worldwide community.



THE MATTRESS FACTORY

This unique, contemporary art museum features site-specific installation art and permanent installations, like the late Greer Lankton's *It's All About ME, not you*. Lankton is remembered for eloquently exploring and questioning the norms of gender and sexuality, as well as the powerful imagery of popular culture and consumerism. Plan a visit and immerse yourself in interactive displays by regional, national and international artists.

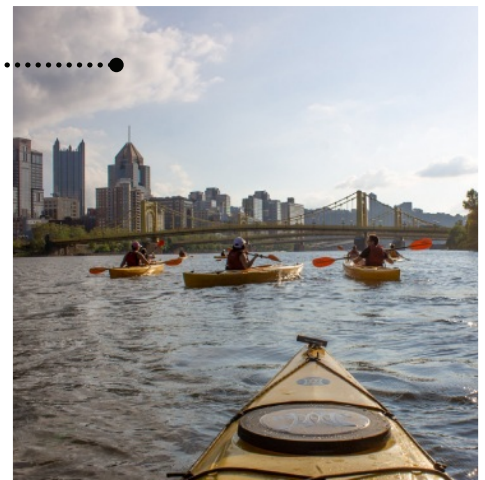


SQUARE CAFÉ

Located in East Liberty, Square Café is a colorful café known for tasty and creative breakfasts, brunches and lunches. Look for local art throughout this super welcoming space owned by community champion Sherree Goldstein.

VENTURE OUTDOORS

Venture Outdoors is a Pittsburgh-based nonprofit that aims to connect people with the benefits of getting outdoors with a strong focus on making Pittsburgh an inclusive, recreational community. Rent a kayak from Kayak Pittsburgh and explore Pittsburgh's iconic three rivers, or take part in one of the many activities the team organizes including hikes, guided bike tours, geocaching and much more.



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ADVENTURES**



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35 YEARS OF DIGNITY SHEPHERD WELLNESS COMMUNITY

by Alasdair Blackwell

In the summer of 1987, four gay men living with AIDS met with Father Lynn Edwards, an Episcopal priest; Bill Brandon, a physician; and Cynthia Klemanski, a social worker. The four gay men wanted to discuss the ramifications of the AIDS pandemic on Pittsburgh, but they were also concerned about the emotional wellbeing of people affected by HIV.

It cannot be overstated the devastation caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, HIV soared across the country and decimated urban queer communities. Diagnoses forced people out of the closet to return home to family who disrespected or disowned them, and robbed our community of a generation of LGBTQ+ folk. The pandemic hit Pittsburgh hard. In fact, Pennsylvania still remains one of the top 10 states in the country for active AIDS cases.

The terror and stigma of HIV/AIDS can be isolating. Those four gay men wanted a space to build a family for other gay men who were facing the disease's ultimatum. That October of 1987, Father Edwards, Brandon, and Klemanski founded the Shepherd Wellness Community (SWC). They held the first Wellness Dinner, a small affair in the Church of the Good Shepherd in Hazelwood. Nowadays, over 250 volunteers oversee these Wellness Dinners every Friday, preparing food to be enjoyed in-house as well as meals to take home or to send to members' households – all free of charge. These Wellness Dinners are often the first place newly-diagnosed HIV+ people can meet up and connect with the community. Shepherd Wellness Community is devoted to personally

supporting HIV/AIDS-positive community members in their time of need until HIV is eliminated. HIV+ members from all over southwestern Pennsylvania have flocked to SWC for support. As the AIDS pandemic tore through America, that need only grew.

In 1990, due to increasing attendance, SCW moved their Wellness Dinners to the First United Methodist Church in Shadyside. SWC's Drop-In Center – a home space for members to meet-up, do their laundry, and generally relax – moved from a small house in Hazelwood to the parish house of the Church of the Good Shepherd to the Bloomfield Community United Methodist Church. In 2002, the church was donated SCW for \$1 and was converted into the SWC Community Center. Thanks to grants and donations, renovations made the former church completely disability-accessible, equipped with a kitchen approved by the Allegheny County Health Department, a dining room, an activity room, modern air conditioning, wiring, plumbing, security, and fire detection systems.

In 2000, SWC ramped up their non-clinical care programs to uplift the wellbeing of the HIV+ people they serve. In addition to their Friday Wellness Dinners, they host many social events at their community center as well as outings to various spots around Pittsburgh, from museumsto Kennywood to cultural events and performances. Their many support groups and education sessions help members navigate the trials and tribulations of living with HIV by providing counseling, information and group therapy in a safe environment to build a constructive mindset among peers. SWC also sets up

confidential peer counselling telephone calls to create a social network among members. Nonsectarian spiritual life programs offer interfaith worship services and community, welcoming members from a variety of religious backgrounds. Every December, SWC holds a candlelight service to honor those who have passed away.

SWC's many fitness and alternative therapy programs aim to bolster physical health. Exercise can relieve fatigue as well as the emotional and bodily stress that often accompanies HIV. At the Community Center, members can attend strength training and exercise classes to learn Tai chi, ballroom dancing, meditation, Zumba, yoga, foot spa, and Pa Tuan Chin.

If a member faces difficulty travelling to these programs, SWC can provide transportation assistance in the form of bus tickets or mileage reimbursement.

The COVID-19 pandemic has and continues to hit hard on all of us, but it was especially difficult for HIV+ people. The HIV+ community was quite understandably cautious, so SWC took every safeguard to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Programs such as the Friday Wellness Dinners went virtual, though SWC still provided frozen meals for pick-up, concerned for their members' nutrition. When in-person Friday Wellness Dinners resumed at the beginning of April 2022, SWC went on to ensure their members' health – requiring attendees to be fully vaccinated, to wear masks, and abide by social

distancing guidelines. SWC looked after a community that was already vulnerable to isolation.

Any HIV+ person who wishes to become a member of Shepherd Wellness Community has to complete a membership application, maintain Ryan White certification, and follow the SWC Member Rights and Responsibilities as well as the SWC Code of Member Conduct. As SWC grew, its membership expanded throughout the queer spectrum of gender and sexuality and included people from many age ranges and racial and ethnic backgrounds. Anyone can contract HIV. SWC stands against discrimination and refuses to tolerate bigotry.

SWC is a 503(c)(3) nonprofit committed to being debt free while offering their services to members at no cost. The beloved OUTrageous Bingo operates as SWC's primary fundraiser. If you would wish to contribute to SWC's mission, you can donate directly, purchase items on its Amazon wishlist, donate a vehicle, or sign a United Way pledge.

An HIV diagnosis can still cause estrangement from family and friends due to stigma and misinformation. For over thirty years, Shepherd Wellness Community has maintained that HIV+ people deserve love and respect just as much as anyone else. HIV is no longer a death sentence and loneliness should never accompany it. 🌈



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Pride is our VOICE



In these changing and challenging times, I cannot help but begin by reflecting on the steadfast foundation of community, having been established now over generations, and the gratitude I feel for those that came before me, and the respect I have for those who so proudly carry our shared Flag of

Pride today.

Coming out in 1972, my experience, and how I saw myself as a gay man, was so vastly different from who we are today, and the wonderfully multifaceted community we have been so privileged to become.

Early pioneers that lit the way for generations to come: Bayard Rustin, Martha P. Johnson, Harvey Milk and Cleve Jones are some coming to mind as I write this. Stallworth and steadfast, in the face of fierce resistance, they and numerous hundreds, struggled and sacrificed to lite a pathway toward freedom and equality that we continue to carve today.

We had found our voice, and that voice was our guiding light through “gay liberation,” and the recognition of our power as a community, the devastation of the AIDS epidemice, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” “The Defense of Marriage Act,” and the ulitimate recongnition by the Supreme Court of The United States of our inalienable right to marriage equality.

And despite brief, and all too few, successes of our common struggle, there is no respite from those who would seek to undo us and the advances toward true equality we have made.

Still daily we are faced with the brutal murder of members of our community and politicians hell-bent, by any means possible, on the systematic unraveling of us and a forced retreat back into “our closets.”

But this is Pride, and the time we celebrate that “this is us.” And we, yes, are a proud and resilient people, who in the face of adversity, time and again, have not only triumphed, but flourished.

Pride is the time we take to the streets and proudly proclaim the stories of who we are, and all we have yet to become. As sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, aunt and uncles, brothers and sisters, and yes, even as children of God.

Pride is the time we reaffirm our commitment to ourselves and celebrate who we are as this amazing hodgepodge of diversity of thought, action and experience.

And so I wish for us a joyous celebration of Pride, filled with all the wonderment of what we as LGBTQIA+ people bring to this world and those around us, the richness of our many faceted culture, and all we bring to those we love and those who love us.

Happy Pride my friends!

Bruce Kraus
Pittsburgh City Council
District 3





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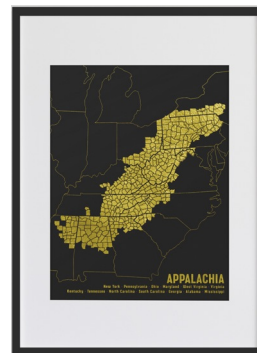


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MARIA MONTAÑO:

Herstory in the making

by Chrissy Costa

On February 14, 2022 history was made in the City of Pittsburgh when Maria Montañó became the first openly trans woman to serve as the City's Press Secretary. She was appointed by Ed Gainey, Pittsburgh's first Black mayor.

Maria Montañó serves as the formal spokesperson for the Office of the Mayor and is the primary liaison between the media and the Mayor's office. She is currently the highest-ranking Latina in city government.

I had the pleasure of speaking with Maria recently to discuss her new role and what she hopes it will mean to the City of Pittsburgh as well as the LGBTQ Community.

When I asked Maria how it felt to be the first openly trans woman to serve as Press Secretary she described it as being a weird feeling. "First and foremost, it's an honor to be able to serve the City, as I never imagined somebody like me ever serving in a position like this because growing up there was no trans representation in state and or local government."

Maria grew up in a small town in rural Colorado with only 99 people in her graduating class. There were no out LGBTQ people within the staff or the students.

"It's one of those moments where you stop and think that this is a huge honor, but there's also a lot of weight to it. It's incredible to get to serve the City, to help tell the story of what the Gainey Administration is doing, to talk to the world at-large, to tell the local and national media about Pittsburgh and what we're doing here. But at the same time feeling the pressure of being the first trans person to hold this position

and understanding that comes with unfortunately a lot of people waiting for you to fail. Feeling like you're not enough for this job and you just got it because of diversity's sake. So it's that challenge of feeling the weight and importance of it, but also being touched that members of the community reach out and say how great it is to have someone like me in this role." Maria says she's received so many letters from parents with trans kids. "I think they're excited for there to be the space where they can point to and say look at what's happening in Pittsburgh. This person, this woman who's in the news everyday is a trans woman, and that could be you. I think there's a lot of power in that for a lot of people in the community right now."

Maria describes her journey to this position as non-traditional. She studied music performance in college. After five years she realized it wasn't what she wanted to do but also knew that she needed to come out. She was dealing with a lot of issues about her identity and who she was as a trans person so she left and began her transition to start living fully as herself.

One of the first jobs she worked at was a copy center where people brought packages that needed to be boxed and shipped. From there she took another job at a high art printing company in Colorado. Artists would mail their paintings in to get hi-res photos done and those would turn into limited edition prints of their artwork. They needed someone who understood shipping logistics and packaging and

Maria did. While there, she saw an opportunity to help with the company's website and ended up creating a new site that she felt better fit their image. They in turn, got her an apprenticeship with somebody who specialized in digital internet advertising because they wanted to understand how to do new marketing. This was before social media existed. So she learned advertising and digital media, which lead to another job where she took those skills and applied them to identifying and finding volunteers to staff a 24 hour crisis hotline at a local rape crisis center.

When Maria moved to Pittsburgh in 2012 she didn't have a job lined up. She moved to be with her partner at that time. The first job she applied to was to be a digital organizer at SEIU. She got the job and through that she learned more personal communication strategies. She served as a communications specialist with SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania, a union representing healthcare and hospital workers throughout the state before accepting her current role as Press Secretary.

She owes a lot of her success to just being open to new experiences.

"I know at the end of the day that I couldn't do this job or even have considered it if I hadn't come out or had the support to do so. Getting the chance to be my full authentic self has opened up my ability to do more, to say yes to more, to have the ability to pursue opportunities I never imagined were possible because I could barely think about existing."

Maria says this was not a position she ever wanted. "I didn't grow up thinking about being the spokesperson for a whole city. Even in the past two months since I started here, there are days I get into work and I see my name on the door and it feels surreal that I work in the Mayor's office. It's exciting and it's thrilling and also beyond my worldview of things I thought I could do. I didn't ever imagine that trans people could be public servants like this because growing up in the 80s and 90s the representation of trans people in the media was sideshow acts on daytime TV shows. We didn't have great role models."



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Maria was surprised when she got the call from the Mayor's office in early February asking if she'd be interested in the position. She says she likely would not have served for any other mayor but Ed Gainey, because she believes in his vision for the city.

"I believe in the way he centers people's voices that for so long haven't been heard, and you see that up and down the administration. I'm the first trans woman, but we also have the first Black woman Deputy Chief of Staff. It's the most diverse administration in the city's history."

"The administration is majority women and I'm not the only queer person. And that was all intentional. Not only are we deeply skilled professionals who know how to do the work we are doing each and every day, but we also bring that added dimension of understanding what it's like to live in this world (for me) as a Latina, as a trans woman. I understand what that's like, and I know the struggle of trying to survive on \$11.85 an hour. I know what it's like to not have access to good quality healthcare. So many of the struggles that others in the city are feeling, we've lived through as well so when we sit around the table and discuss what we are going to do to make Pittsburgh a more welcoming and thriving city, a city where everyone can feel safe, we come at it through a completely different perspective. I think that's what is giving people a lot of hope about what we may be able to accomplish."

Maria offered her personal feelings on both the attacks against trans people and how we in the LGBTQ Community could better stand together.

"Right now we are seeing a national and global movement of using trans people as a broader wedge both inside the LGBTQ community but also outside of that. We are definitely feeling the impact of legislation across the country in a way that we haven't seen since the late 90s and early 2000s attacks against same-sex marriage. So I think for our perspective in the trans community we were right there fighting in the trenches for that and what we need now more than ever is for our cis allies to stand up with us and let them know you are with us and that you have our backs because the attacks aren't going to just stop with us. Now is the time as a community to stand up and say we're gonna fight for and to protect and defend trans rights. Now is the time where we can definitely use loud, active, physical allies."

When asked what she would like to say to the LGBTQ Community, and more specifically, the trans community, Maria said, "It's not enough for me to be the first. It's not enough to have visibility, we need more than that. If I'm not ripping that door down to make it easier for the next person who looks like me to walk through it then hold me accountable to that. I don't want that door slammed shut behind me. I want to make sure I'm doing the work to help improve everybody's lives. At the end of the day, it's very much a temporary job because administrations change. So by the time I leave, if I haven't made it easier for one trans person in our community to come out and feel seen or feel like they could take on something big and bold then I feel like I would have failed in regards to what I hope to accomplish here. I hope that I can not just serve the city but that I can also make my community proud. So when I leave they can be like 'that was awesome.'" 🌈



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Pride is Political



Happy Pride!

As the first out queer woman in Pennsylvania's General Assembly, a place not very friendly to LGBTQ+ people, Pride in who I am and what our community is fighting for keeps me moving forward every day.

Pride was not a value instilled in me growing up – as a daughter of a pastor in a conservative religious community, I felt I had no choice except to be closeted as a teen. It wasn't until college that I came out, and even then only to a small group of trusted friends. Coming out, as so many of us know, is an ongoing process, never complete. Throughout my 20s, the circle of individuals I was out to continued to grow, until, as I sometimes quipped, I was out to everyone but my family. Being publicly closeted about who I am was never an option in my mind when I decided to run for office, so now I'm out to everyone who googles my name. As an adult, I choose to live the values of Pride openly.

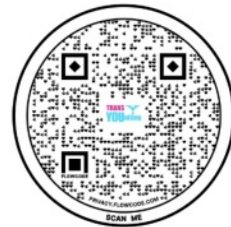
I don't remember what year it was that I first went to a Pride celebration, but I do remember when I first learned the history of Pride, and the many ways it has been coopted from the fight led by Black, Trans women. Pride parades and festivals are a wonderful way to highlight and celebrate our community, but it's critical that we don't forget our roots, especially at a time when LGBTQ+ rights, and especially Trans rights, are being threatened across the nation. Attending Pride is about being part of a community larger than ourselves, and that also means being in the fight to protect all of us, year-round.

"Pride is political" is a phrase said so often as to be a cliché, and yet it has never been truer. This year, let us remember the spirit and roots of Pride amidst our celebrations and parades. I'll hope to see many of you at Pride, and please be sure to come say hi when you see me!

In solidarity,
Jessica Benham
State Representative
District 36



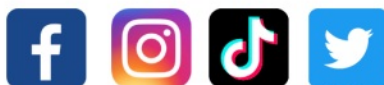
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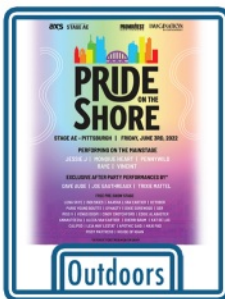
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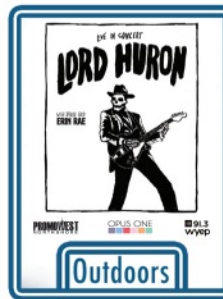
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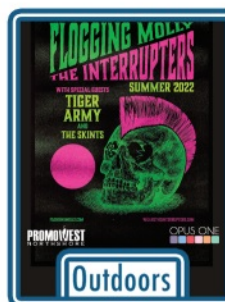
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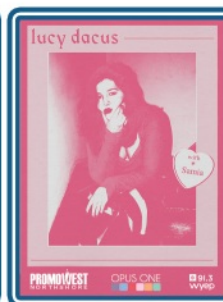
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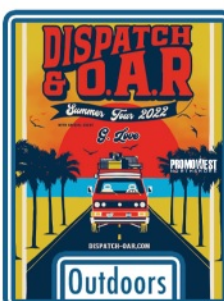
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1 Step Forward 2 Steps Back

Reflecting on the Victories and Obstacles to LGBTQ Rights Since Last Pride

by Hansen Bursic

The LGBTQ community has been through a lot since Pride 2021. From “Don’t Say Gay” bills to horrendous legislation targeting trans kids, it’s easy to feel like this last year has been one of the worst yet for trans and queer people. Yet still, we persist as a community, stronger than ever before in a new age of political representation and cultural visibility.

Across the nation and here in Pittsburgh, it’s important to take the time to reflect on our progress and celebrate our victories. This all while continuing to speak out against the troubling attacks against our community. As we celebrate this year, let’s center the voices of LGBTQ activists fighting for a better future and push for the progress we need beyond just Pride season.

A Look Nationally

It is important to take a moment, before celebrating victories, to call out the anti-LGBTQ legislation that has hindered the progress of our movement this year. Anti-trans legislation and policies that target gender-affirming care have ripped through states like Texas, Alabama, and Idaho. At the same time, new laws targeting LGBTQ-inclusive education silence teachers and students alike in Florida and Alabama and may pass in states as close as Ohio soon.

Taking a look at the victories this year, US passports will now have a gender-neutral “x” option for the first time, following new guidance from the Department of State. A little closer to home, Pennsylvania’s former Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine became the nation’s first transgender four-star officer. While she is dearly missed in our state by many, she continues to shine as a beacon of hope as we continue to fight the COVID pandemic.

In Pennsylvania

In many ways, we are privileged as Pennsylvanians, although it often doesn’t feel like it. Our state has so far avoided the most heinous of anti-LGBTQ legislation seen in other states. One noticeable exception is HB 972, a bill that would prohibit transgender girls and women from participating in girls’ and women’s school sports. It

recently passed in the statehouse and, while Governor Wolf promised a swift veto, it remains a reminder that our state is not exempt from transphobic legislation.

All LGBTQ rights legislation in the state has yet to make it across the finish line. Statewide hate crimes and non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ Pennsylvanians continue to remain in perpetual limbo, despite calls from Governor Wolf and Democratic lawmakers to pass bills protecting our community.

When it comes to victories, LGBTQ politicians shined across the state. Tyler Titus, who was the first openly transgender elected official in Pennsylvania, ran a historic campaign for Erie County Executive. While they did not come out the victor, the campaign showed that trans politicians can be just as competitive as any politicians in our state and will hopefully inspire more trans people to run for office. On the other side of the state, LGBTQ candidates in Philly continued historic campaigns including Malcolm Kenyatta who ran for US Senate, Deja Lynn Alvarez who ran to be Pennsylvania’s first openly transgender state representative, and Brian Sims who ran for Lt. Governor.

In Pittsburgh

LGBTQ Pittsburghers shined this year in a time marked by great change in our city. Under Mayor Gainey, Pittsburgh welcomed Maria Montañó as Press Secretary, making her the first openly trans woman to serve in the role in our city’s history.

While statewide progress on non-discrimination remains slow, Dormont borough council joined Sharpsburgh and Crafton in passing a local ordinance extending protections to LGBTQ residents in areas of housing, employment, and public accommodation.

As we look to the future of our movement, young people in Pittsburgh continue to lead the way in being some of the loudest advocates for LGBTQ rights. Young Pittsburghers stood strong against anti-LGBTQ legislation, participating in a walkout motivated by homophobic and transphobic bills across the nation in March. 

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Pride in Yourself

— by Chad Isaiah —



It's Pride Month again! The time to reflect on the journey the LGBTQ community has made to get where we are today. We still have a long way to go, but there is also a lot to celebrate. Years ago, it was referred to as "Gay Pride," and fortunately the name has changed to become more inclusive. However, there are some things that stay the same over the years: the "Pride Body." Working in the health and wellness space, I frequently hear phrases such as "I gotta work on my Pride Body" or "I gotta hit the gym all month if I want that Pride Body!" Whatever your definition of a Pride Body is, it positions a particular body as acceptable for Pride celebrations while other bodies (those deemed not ready) are unacceptable.

What is a Pride Body?

You've likely heard of a beach body or bikini body — similarly a Pride Body is a goal body type rarely achieved by most. This body is often based on the desire to change the way one's body looks in order to make it more desirable to others. It is rooted in shame and negative self-beliefs around one's current body. Simply, it is comparing one's body to an ideal body which is typically overrepresented in media and popular LGBTQ culture: thin, toned, muscular, white, cis, able-bodied and expressing their gender in conventionally masculine ways. These bodies are used to advertise Pride events and lure in spectators, sponsors and participants. A Pride body takes effort and time, diet and exercise, and it is best dressed in as few clothes as possible.

How We Got Here

Pride is a celebration of the entire LGBTQ community.

However, gay men have been historically overrepresented in Pride media, which has led to the current landscape. Gay men's bodies have long been defined by standards of masculinity, which in Western culture is defined, in part, via the expression of sexual desire and power. Thus in gay male culture there exists an intense focus on masculinity, sex, and desirability.

In the 1960s, when the gay liberation movement emerged in the United States, body standards were the thin, androgynous hippie-style. As the Gay Rights Movement advanced, body standards for gay men became more idealized, unattainable and rigid. In the 1970s, white working-class gay men wearing masculine fabrics such as denim and leather and a mustache or facial hair became the de facto icon. In the early 1980s, with the arrival of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, body norms shifted further to the ideal slim, toned, white and able-bodied aesthetic. While contemporary public opinion depicted gay men as diseased, the ideal body aesthetic of the time was one that connoted health, cleanliness, and physical fitness in the form of muscularity. Despite the anti-identity movements of the 1990s, such as radical queer and transgender movements which gave rise to other gender and sexual norms and further subcultures, the gay gym aesthetic still predominated in the mainstream.

Consequences of Accepting the Norm

The adulation of the "Pride Body" creates a hierarchy in which we deem conventional masculinity as most desirable. Those who possess softer, "feminine" personality traits or whose bodies are "soft," "curvaceous" or "fat" are shamed and positioned as undesirable. On the other end of the spectrum, supposed exoticism and hypermasculine traits often lead to overt sexual objectification, most prevalent in the Black and Indigenous people of color (BIPOC) community.

As a health coach, I feel it is only appropriate to discuss how dieting for Pride can also result in serious, long-term health consequences. Restricting food intake triggers an evolutionary famine response within the body. The body feels as though it is starving and subsequently moves its natural set-point weight higher in an attempt to avoid a future famine state. "Yo-yo dieting"—the cycle of weight loss and subsequent weight gain often experienced by

dieters--is itself a cause of weight gain — not one's undisciplined habits or behaviors. Thus anyone who feels pressured to diet in order to fit in may as a result end up at a higher weight than where they started, negatively impacting their physical and mental health due to the yo-yo cycle and further feelings of disconnection.

Creating Pride for All

Pride should fill us with energy and hope--not anxiety and stress. Pride should be “come as you are,” not “only if you meet certain standards of acceptability.” This should be true for people of all genders, sexualities, races and abilities. Pride is replacing the norm with variation, embracing all bodies as well as other forms of difference, because Pride for some isn't really Pride at all. A Pride Body is any body belonging to a member of the LGBTQ community that is present at a Pride celebration or event. All bodies are worthy of joy, satisfaction, pleasure and respect.

If we truly desire to create a more inclusive space, we need to start by examining our own lives. Are our friend groups homogeneous or diverse? Do we speak out when we see transgressions from others within the LGBTQ community, not just from outsiders? Do our words welcome those who are different from us, even when not in public spaces? What words do we speak over our own bodies? Are we willing to accept that we already live in a Pride Body? 



Inclusive communities are strong communities.

The URA stands with Pittsburgh's LGBTQIA+ community and allies in the fight for social justice and equality. We understand the LGBTQIA+ community faces challenges in economic, housing, health, workforce, educational, and social environments. Everyone deserves to feel safe, welcome, and included in all our City has to offer.

The URA is here for you, and we celebrate you. Explore our services and resources for City of Pittsburgh residents and businesses, designed to provide inclusive opportunities for every resident.

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Pride After Pride

by Michael Buzzelli

Picture it... Pittsburgh, 2017, mid-June; it was the first sunny day in the city almost three weeks. The boys were donning their glitter and gold in preparation of the parade.

For all its faults, Pittsburgh's Pride was the annual event that kicked off summer. Every year, without fail, it rained throughout the entirety of the Three Rivers Arts Festival. Perhaps a disgruntled painter or bead maker couldn't get a booth at the festival many moons ago and cursed the artisanal event. He or she may have boogied down to the world's most potent rain dance. Or perhaps Pittsburgh in early June is just notoriously wet.

Pride may goeth before the fall, but it always came after the rain, and you can't make rainbows without rain.

At nine o'clock on that Sunday morning, I gathered with a group of improvisers and comedians from the Arcade Comedy Theater, LGBTQ and allies, to march in the parade.

The year before, I marched with some friends from Starbucks. I was never a barista. I don't even drink coffee, but a friend of mine who managed a Starbucks was wrangling marchers for the parade and I volunteered. The year before that, I marched with the Steel City Volleyball League. I did play volleyball...badly. I may be a serial marcher. I like being in the parade more than watching the parade, and making a firm commitment is enough to rouse me out of bed on a Sunday morning after partying Saturday night.

When the Arcade Comedy Theater opened, I met with Kristy Nolen and Abby Fudor on Banksville Road, at yet another Starbucks, where I sipped a large, black, unsweetened iced tea and we discussed LGBTQ comedy. Founders Nolen and Fudor, along with Nolen's husband, Jeffrey, and Fudor's now-husband Michael Rubino were new to Liberty Avenue, and they were excited to participate in Pittsburgh's Pride. Kristy Nolen said, "We're the new neighbors, and we want to show support. What can we do?"

We developed a weekend of LGBTQ comedy for Pride, which has since grown exponentially since that first big gay weekend in 2017. In 2018, we formed LGBTQ*Bert, an improv team made up of entirely LGBTQ improvisers. There were four of us in the beginning: John Feightner, Connor McCanlus, Kayleigh Blanchette Kingsbury and me. It has also grown exponentially, with more than a dozen LGBTQ performers weaving in and out of its ranks.

But in 2017, a small group of us gathered on that warm Sunday morning on the Boulevard of the Allies when an actual ally, Missy Moreno, sashayed down the street in a pink feather boa, wearing every conceivable color underneath. She was a walking rainbow. Jared Pascoe flipped up his sunglasses, clutched his coffee close and went in for a hug. The first year, Pascoe's Gay for Good and the Arcade Comedy Theater marched together. The following year, both groups were too large to march together.

Side note: Pascoe's Golden Girls reenactment shows with Billy Mason, Jason Shavers, Conor McCanlus and Brian Edwards reached near-legendary status. They sold out every year.

I stood by and watched Missy and Jared embrace and a special tingle went up and down my spine. My comedy world and my gay world merged for the first time.

Pittsburgh Pride had a notorious reputation, but sometimes a flower pops up in the cracks of the cement. No matter what the circumstances, we must be grateful for those moments that we get a chance to celebrate our whole selves. That is what Pride is all about. 🌈





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None of this would be possible without the incredible enthusiasm of our participants and the unwavering support of the Pittsburgh LGBTQ+ community for which we offer a million thanks. We look forward to continuing to work with you as we strive to help all people live longer, healthier, and fuller lives.

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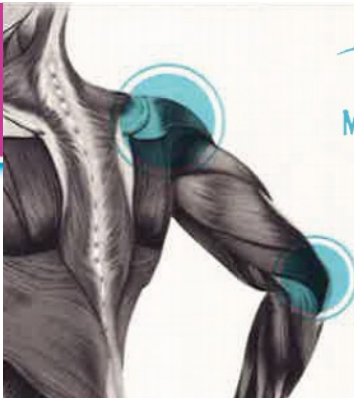
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SURVIVING PRIDE

MOMMA KYLE'S ADVICE FOR A HAPPY, HEALTHY PRIDE

by Kyle Leotsakos

PRIDE!!!!!! Now **this** is the most wonderful time of the year for the LGBTQIA+ Community! It's the time where we all gather and celebrate who we are as a community and as individuals. As we band together to stand for our rights, we celebrate our differences and look to the future of our community. As you can imagine, Pride can be pretty overwhelming for newcomers, allies, or even the general public, but during Pride, **everyone is welcome!** So pull up a chair and read about some Pride inquiries, how to approach or not approach, crop top or daisy dukes (nope, neither), and other topics... HAPPY PRIDE!!!

Dear Momma,

I'm 17 years old and I just came out of the closet this year. I really want to go to Pride, but I don't have many gay friends and I'm scared of going alone. Do you have any advice for someone young, new to the community, and how I should approach going to Pride this year?

Lil' Newbie

Dear Lil' Newbie,

The real deal is that ALL of us at some point had to contend with going to our first PRIDE and the different factors that came with that. First let me say, **YOU CAN GO TO PRIDE WITH ANYONE--Gay, Straight, hell bring your parents or other family members.** You would be surprised at the different events with varying levels of inclusivity for the different parts of our community. **USE** the PRIDE guide and QBurgh.com to look for events that may be good for you and your friends and family. You already took the plunge in coming out, but PRIDE is something that you might have to just dip your toe into the pool before diving in entirely. PRIDE is not something to be scared of. There is strength in numbers and we're all a part of the community. The point is to have fun celebrating who you are with those who love you for being you...it's really that simple.

Dear Momma,

I've been with my boyfriend for about 5 years now. Our first PRIDE as a couple, we had a threesome with a random person. Under any other circumstances, we never do anything like that. However, over the last couple of years, PRIDE has become the time when the discussion about "Opening Up the Relationship" rears its head and I'm starting to worry. That was a one-time thing for me and I don't want to do it again just for the sake of staying with someone. What do you think I should do?

Once Was Enough

Dear Once Was Enough,

I'd like to be fair to your boyfriend and at least state that license was implied given the precedent of the initial act. **HOWEVER,** how have you been handling the situation over the course of the last several years? If it's still something that he's asking for, I'd suggest you take a different approach than you have been because something isn't quite resonating with him. Maybe try letting him know how you **TRULY** feel about your relationship and how his "Yearly Pride Desires" make you feel about the security of your relationship with him and where you stand as a couple. I think that during PRIDE, a lot of us tend to lose some inhibitions and maybe do things that are out of our comfort zone because the environment can be so freeing. How you bounce back from those actions will dictate the affect they will have in your future. Obviously, I think your relationship is solid enough if it's been several years and he tends to drop it after you say no, but you should really just be honest about how it makes you feel and that the opportunity is off the table. No matter what, make sure you have fun with your man at PRIDE, whatever that may mean for the both of you.

Dear Momma,

I am not out at work but have recently been concerned about volunteering with my employer-based resource group at PRIDE this year. It is something that I am really passionate about, but I'm worried that it will automatically start calling my sexuality into question and those are questions I'm not willing to entertain in the workplace. I believe no matter what, my sexuality has no bearing on my career, but it's just my personal preference to remain private about it. How would you handle this situation if it were you?

Workplace Silence

Dear Workplace Silence,

You make a valid point. Sometimes we're outed by association with causes related to our community and we can carry that with us through many facets of our personal and professional lives. I can speak from experience that there are always several allies present with employer-based resource groups that represent family members, colleagues, etc., so it may not be as automatic as you think. As always, I'd have to tell you to let your COMFORT level guide you. If you're not prepared to answer questions, you may want to limit your involvement, and that's OK. If you can easily think of a friend or colleague that you're close with at work that is out, you can show your support for them and, vicariously, yourself. I don't think there's

anything wrong with keeping your private life private. It doesn't make you any more or less proud of who you are as a member of this community. I would, however, invite you to entertain the possibility that it won't be the apocalypse if you came out at work. Work will still be work and life will still go on. Be open to opportunities to be your most authentic self without apologies, because that's what PRIDE is all about.



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