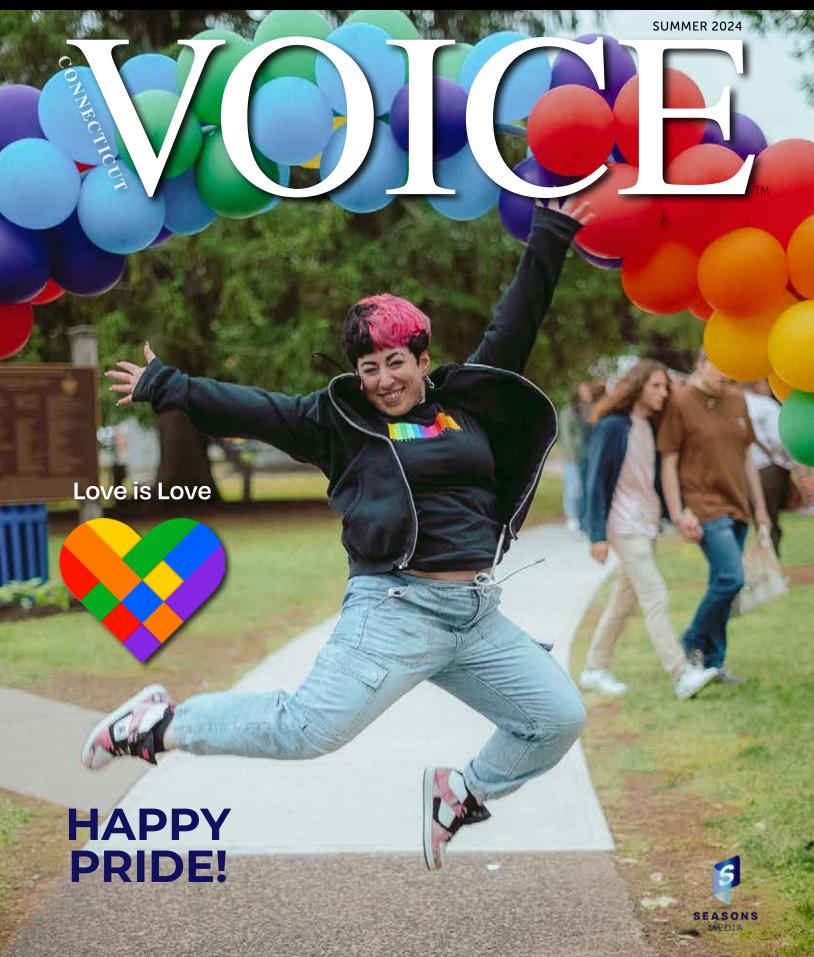
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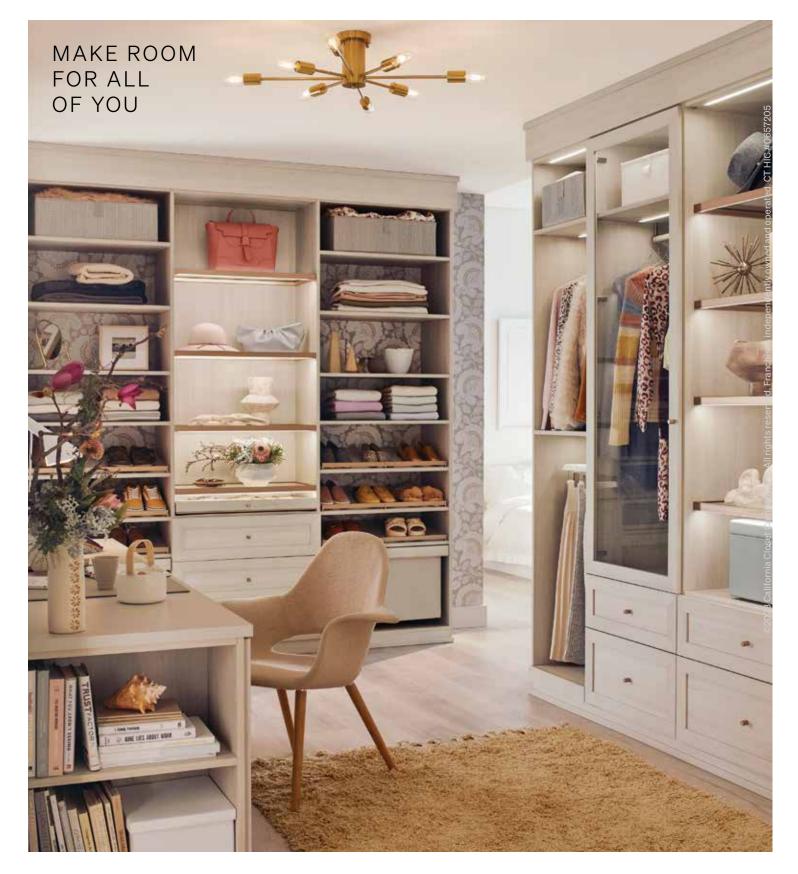
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EDITOR'S NOTE //



Happy Pride!

Amazing how the time goes, and this is the third Pride issue I've had the privilege of editing since I took on this role. I am so proud of the team we work with and am so humbled by the incredible people and organizations that we've been able to cover and the support and interest of our wonderful and diverse LGBTQ+ community in Connecticut.

In this issue, we look at the remarkable evening we had at the Bushnell in Hartford on April 27, when the second Connecticut Voice Honors took the stage to honor ten extraordinary individuals, public servants, and organizations who contribute to the quality of life in our state. There were many inspiring messages from Jim Obergefell, our Lifetime Achievement honoree; our own Dawn Ennis, our Profiles in Courage honoree; and Styx Hatch, our Commitment to Youth Initiatives honoree.

Each of them shared inspiring, personal messages of pride, commitment, and courage. If you were there, you know it was an exciting and uplifting night, and if you missed it...Well, we hope to see you at the next one.

Speaking of the diversity of our community, you'll want to check out Jane Latus' feature on the many different flags that have been designed to represent different people and identities. While they are different - and their origins fascinating - what I hope you take away from that piece is the love, inclusion, and pride that give our communities its richness. Jane also did the tireless work of assembling a calendar of Pride events around the state—giving you plenty of opportunities to get out and celebrate in June and beyond. We'll continue to update this calendar online.

Frank Rizzo talked to playwright and activist Tony Kushner about his latest work and reflections on how the LGBTQ+ communities have evolved in recent years.

Dawn Ennis profiles Christina Vega, another young person who is making change and advocating for acceptance in her community. As a bisexual person of color, she is living authentically and providing an inspirational model for others to do the same.

Kimberly Adamski profiles PFLAG as it turns 50 and shows how the support of our families and allies have been instrumental in the progress that we have made. In her regular column, Kim also includes some very frank talk about birth control and how it's important for LGBTQ+ people.

Meghan Crutchley writes about how we can be present as we move through our lives, important techniques for a busy-and sometimes hectic-world.

Yes, there is more work to do for all our LGBTQ+ community. That's a point that was made by all the honorees at our event in April. Sometimes it may seem challenging and frustrating, but one thing they all have in common is that they all keep going because they-and we-all share the vision that the work may never be done, but we must face the challenges.

That said, it's also important to take a pause to aclkowledge our successes our natural and/or chosen families, and our communities. We're here. We're proud. And we deserve our celebrations!

Christopher Byrne, Editor chris@ctvoice.com

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Celebrating Five Years of Connecticut Voice

2024 marks the fifth anniversary of Connecticut Voice. We're proud to have been able to celebrate our state's LGBTQ+ communities and to feature so many people who have entertained, inspired, and worked hard to ensure a positive quality of life for us in the state.

As we move into our sixth year, we remain as committed as ever to amplifying the voices of our communities, celebrating our achievements, and honoring those who work tirelessly on our behalf.

From the arts to politics to education, we are committed to uniting communities and

covering it all with honesty, passion, and consideration for the many individuals and organizations we serve.

And we like to have a little fun along the way.

Thanks to all our readers, listeners, and viewers, who have been our supporters for the past five years. We look forward to continuing to serve you in the years ahead, and we welcome your participation—and your voices—at any time.

Together, we are striving to make life in Connecticut for the LGBTQ+ communities the best it can be.

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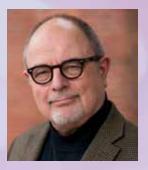
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CONTRIBUTORS //



FRANK RIZZO

Frank Rizzo caught up with playwright Tony Kushener (page 28.) He has written about the arts in Connecticut and nationally for more than 40 years; for the The New York Times, American Theatre Magazine and dozens of other outlets. He is also a theater critic for Variety. Follow Frank's work at ShowRiz.com and on Twitter@ShowRiz.



KIM ADAMSKI

Kim Adamski wrote about the history of PFLAG (page 40). She also writes our frank column on sexual health. She is a Hartford-based sexual educator. Kim loves answering the questions people are afraid to ask, and that's what motivated her to go into sex education. If you have questions about sex, contact her at adamski.kimberly@ gmail.com.



CHION WOLF

Chion is the host of Audacious on Connecticut Public Radio. A two-time recipient of the Gracie Award, from the Alliance for Women in Media Foundation, she received The Advocate's Champions of Pride 2021 as an "unsung" LGBTQ+ hero. She has produced storytelling events in Connecticut and is on the board of Night Fall, Inc. an annual performance event. Chion is also a certified judge with the International Chili Society.



DAWN ENNIS

Dawn profiles youth activist Christina Vega (page 36). Dawn is also a member of the CT Voice advisory board and an award-winning journalist, professor at University of Hartford, and a producer at WTIC in Hartford. Dawn was America's first transgender journalist in a TV network newsroom when she came out more than nine years ago. Follow her @lifeafterdawn on X, Facebook, and Instagram, Dawn and her family reside in West Hartford, Connecticut.



JANE LATUS

Jane Latus complied our Pride calendar (page 45) and looked at the many flags of the LGBTQ+ community (page 56). She and her wife live in Canton with an escalating number of cats. They have three grown children: two sons (one trans and one gay) and a foster daughter.

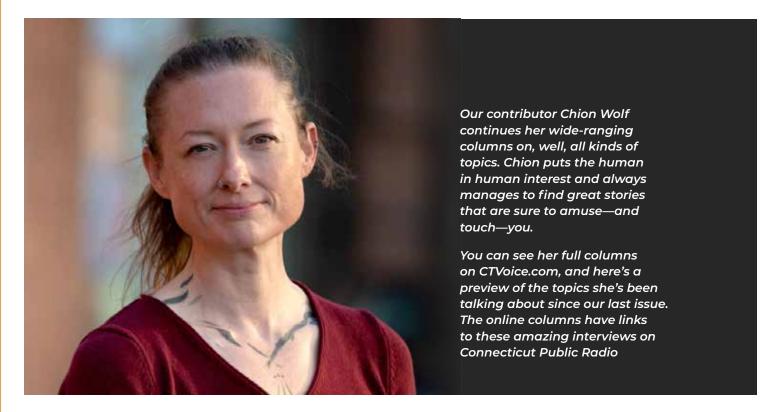


MEGHAN CRUTCHLEY

Meghan Crutchley is a National Board Certified Health and Wellness coach, educator, speaker, writer, and the CEO of Habitqueer, a company founded to improve the health and well being of queer professionals one habit at a time. With content and solutions developed for the individual, leadership or large group audiences they are uniquely positioned to focus on health issues including stress reduction, sleep, nutrition, behavior change geared toward queer professional and queer affinity groups.



The Audacious Voice



Show & Tell—Anyone who has ever had the chance to meet Chion knows that when it comes to interviews, she is more than prepared. So, what would happen, she wondered, if she went into a show with absolutely no prep? She took on the challenge and ended up doing an extended Show & Tell session (Remember those from elementary school?) with 21 people. Live. In a Brewery. And the result? Well, you can read all about it online, or hear the interviews, but the upshot is, it was a revelation—and a reminder to stay open and vulnerable to anything that comes your way in life.

Al Love—Can an Al Chatbot replace human interaction? Well, yes and no, as Chion found out when she delved into the topic. While there's no replacement for real, live human interaction, believe it not there is a benefit to the kind of fantasy interaction relational, even erotic—with an AI partner. It's a kind of a dopamine hit with no regret, no cheating, and definitely no "walk of shame" involved. In fact, Chion talked to a guy who claims his AI chatbot partner saved his marriage. As Chion points out—and as you'll discover—at the root of it all, AI is just providing a new way for people to feel comfort, confidence,





For more Chion, tune in to hear much more on Connecticut Public Radio, Saturdays at 10 AM and Wednesdays at 11 PM, or stream the podcast any time.





It's a kind of a dopamine hit with no regret, no cheating, and definitely no "walk of shame" involved.



something it's a pretty safe guess all of us humans have been looking for for years.

Starbucking - Who would guessthat a goal of visiting every corporate-owned Starbuck's on the planet would lead to revelations about a healthy approach to life? Well, Chion, obviously. She talks to a guy named Winter who set that lofty goal, and, well, Starbuck's ended up expanding faster than he anticipated. When he started this quixotic caffeinated odyssey, in 1997, there were a relatively manageable 1,400 Starbuck's stores. At the time Chion interviewed him, Winter had visited a cool 19,172 locations, becoming a bit of a celebrity—and setting his sights on a few other chains to visit. The larger lesson, though, as Chion points out is that learning to pivot is perhaps one of the most important skills we can develop. And why not see where the roads lead you? It's bound to be an adventure if you let it be one. 🚺

Get The Picture Cate Barry specializes in LGBTQ+ photography • All photos by Cate Barry



feel obliged to follow what they consider established traditions.

"There's often something political about LGBTQ+ weddings," Barry adds, "there's an acknowledgment that this wasn't always legal in our lives. So, let's just take a minute to think about that. No one is doing that at a straight wedding.

"The part that has gotten me in the throat, and makes me well up is seeing a bunch of queers on the dance floor having the time of their lives. Any time I'm there, everyone

photograph is just a picture, right? Well, not really. And certainly not when you're talking about wedding photography. Hamdenbased photographer Cate Barry takes a very specific approach to wedding photography: it's all about authenticity. And it's about telling a story.

Barry, who identifies as queer, also does a lot of portrait photographs, and whatever the situation, she aims to understand the person or people who are her subjects and help them find expression that's true to who they are.

She describes the entire process as "the expressive collaboration between the subject and me, but there is also responsibility. Today, we're all content creators, producing imagery and words for the world. In my tiny little space, the images I want to put in the world are those that add to the conversation about what sexy, and love, and joy are."

Barry says she loves queer weddings the best. "It's not just 'yay, we're gay!' Queer weddings tend to be more thoughtful, more intentional, and more personal in a healthy way. If many LGBTQ folks have failed at achieving the hetero standards of love and marriage, [by getting married], we're already not living up to that standard, so we feel less confined and restricted." She says that many straight couples feel confined by standards they feel they have to fulfill, and suggests that it may be difficult for them not to







are and how they decided on the wedding they are planning. "I find out what's important to them, and use that as a jumping off place."

For portrait subjects, Barry follows the same process: Who are you? Why do you want this? Her goal is always to allow someone to feel at ease and as though they're expressing something important about themselves. She notes that there is "so much advice out there" about how to be, and for the most part, that's all about guiding people to be other than who they are, to perform for a supposed standard, rather than expressing themselves.

Photographs, Barry says, have an extended life; they are in a way permanent. And when you look at it, you may always remember what was going on at the time it was taken. Wouldn't you like that to be a joyful memory?

Barry notes that photography is both an art and a science. The science comes from lighting, angles, and all the related technology. The art, however, is in allowing the individual to come through in the image. "What's behind your eyes?" That's what Barry wants to capture.

"It's about showing up for yourself," she concludes.
Many LGBTQ+ people in her experience are used to "wearing a mask and not being fully seen." Barry's work is about more than letting her subjects feel seen; it's about letting the world see the unique and wonderful individuals she works with.

Reach Cate—and see more examples of her extraordinary work—at catebarryphotography.com.



-Christopher Byrne

is so happy and joyful and wholesome in a way, and it makes me think about all the hate and vitriol that might be expressed in opposition to these people."

Barry continues that having an LGBTQ+ person behind the camera is a positive experience. "You can have a million allies, but they can't really understand in the same way when there are queer people on both sides of the camera."

Barry begins the process talking to the couple about their wedding, why they are getting married when they don't have to, for example. She wants to know who these people

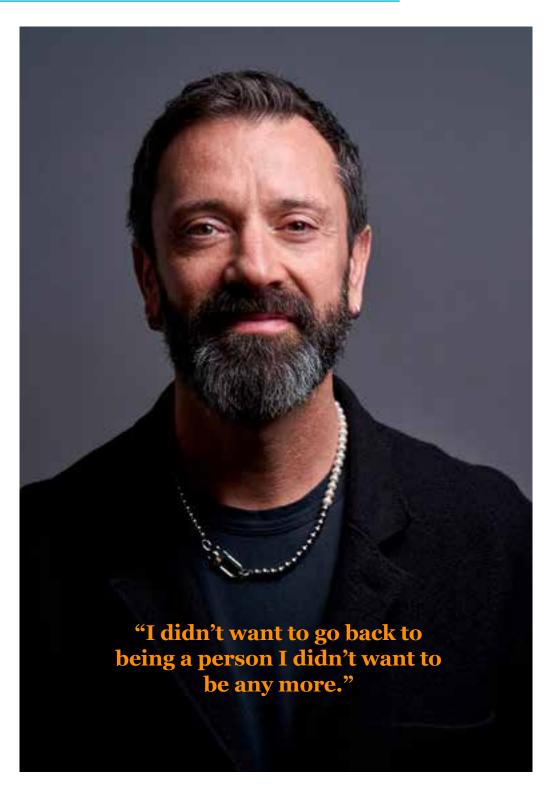


Divorce as a Spiritual Journey: One Man's Odyssey

hen Karl Dunn married his husband, he thought he had everything he wanted. He had a great job in advertising, a trophy home in Los Angeles, the right clothes, the right car, and what he called a "bear god" in bed with him at night. And then it all went wrong.

Or perhaps, not all, but Karl realized that he wanted needed, really—was to get divorced. However that turned out, as he said in a conversation with Connecticut Voice, to be a "minefield." That simple request to end his marriage ended up sending him on a journey, which, while torturous, harrowing, emotionally devastating, and excessively complicated (and, no, that's not an exaggeration), also stared him on a journey of discovery. It turned into a spiritual quest of sorts, and Karl ultimately found the life he wanted to live rather than the one he felt he was *supposed* to be living.

Karl has captured his journey in a remarkable new book How to Burn a Rainbow. Certainly, he chronicles the trials (literal and figurative) of a divorce, which were an awakening in and of themselves. For example, the divorce laws in California were written to protect the lower earner—typically a wife with dependent children. They say nothing about two people of the same gender and their often very different situation. In Dunn's case, that was used against him, leaving him virtually penniless. (If nothing else, Dunn would advise you to be aware of the divorce laws in your state before tying the knot, as unromantic as



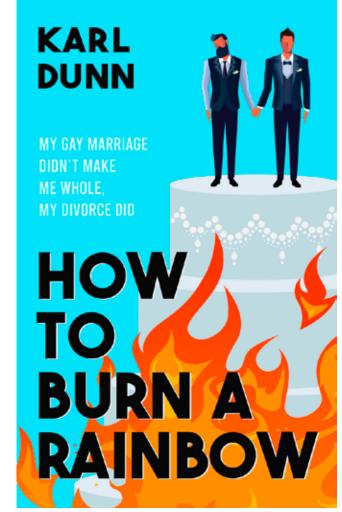
that might seem to people in the throes of planning a wedding.)

It is, however, Karl's recovery that becomes the centerpiece of the book. and he writes with honesty and self-awareness about gay culture and himself as a gay man. At one point, he writes out five reasons why he chose to get married, from doing it "for the cause because we could," to the more emotional need to hope to hold onto a partner. As he analyzed his reasons, Karl realized that none of them were really any good, and the one that was good—the tax breaks for married people—was completely negated by the cost of the divorce.

And while Karl's impulse was to move on and "jump into the next thing," he managed to pause and look inside. He was lonely, but he also had to confront that those feelings were propelled by deeper insecurities that nobody wants to think about.

"No one wants to have that conversation with themselves in the mirror," Karl said. This was my crisis of identity for better or worse. And there was a point where I'd just gone out so far, there was no way I could go back. I was so far from shore. I didn't want to go back to being a person I didn't want to be any more. And yet, when you embark on a journey into the unknown as I did, guides will show up."

Karl's guides took the form of friends he met in Berlin, others in Los Angeles, and people who had been through their own transformative processes. Like a good journeyman, he took pieces from other disciplines, such as 12-Step programs and Buddhism. He calls the book "the collected wisdom of more than one hundred people,"



One of the most surprising things on his journey was the kinship Karl ended up feeling with divorced, straight guys.

from all walks of life—many of them surprising.

One of the most surprising things on his journey was the kinship Karl ended up feeling with divorced, straight guys. "Divorced straight guys saved me. If you are LGBT and you are going through a divorce, find the straight people at work who've been through it. They will save your lives."

Among the other hard lessons, Karl had to learn was to be present in the moment, to the extent possible, and accept whatever was going on. He describes the text he received from a friend who after Karl had been very upset about something in the divorce that simply said, "This is what it feels like to be Karl today."

He also writes about a friend who encouraged him to see his own part in everything that happened, to take what he calls "radical responsibility" for all that happened in his life so he could no longer play the victim. Hard as that was, it was also liberating.

Karl writes with such feeling and such honesty that issues common to many spiritual practices such as striving to be present, letting go of the past, and accepting life on its own terms become visceral for the reader. It's not just empathy we feel, though, it's identification.

"I think what this journey taught me more than anything is, is not only to find myself, know myself, love myself, despite for all my imperfections...to love all of that."

And as Karl says, the journey continues. Karl is embarking on a speaking tour to share his experience, which he says starts, with "Hi, everyone, I'm hear with bad news..." Of course, he's joking, and the universality of this powerful book and it's message of hope—and doing the hard work it requires—is ideal for all of us.

You can hear my full conversation with Karl on the Voice Out Loud Podcast.

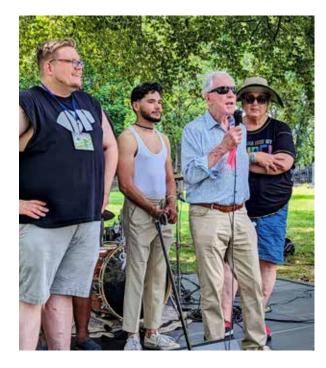


By Elliot Leonard and Roger Litz

Celebrating the Centers of Pride

ride 2024 lands in the middle of much unrest, tragedy, and uncertainty swirling in the world around us. Yet it is exactly times like these when it is important to take a moment to be grateful for the work of our local LGBTQ+ community centers. Often unassuming, financially lean (read: broke!) and staffed by underpaid heroes, these centers play a vital role in cities, towns, and rural areas throughout the country. They have been described as "the heart and soul of LGBTQ+ communities." Here in Connecticut, they often provide the first opportunity for many young people to participate in a diverse range of activities with peers like them. These experiences allow folks to grow in self-awareness and confidence as they enter the rapidly changing world they will have to navigate in the future. These centers also provide services to adults and seniors, a fast-growing demographic who are often isolated and looking for some sense of community.

Even as we enjoy an assortment of celebrations in June, many of us are familiar with the phrase, "Pride is Every Day." This is a philosophy that LGBTQ+ community



centers embody. At a time when our community finds itself under deplorable attack throughout the country, these centers offer the comforting assurance that Pride extends well beyond parades (though the parades are fun, too!). They remind us that Pride is community. Pride is collaboration.

Pride is Connecticut.

Part of the reason we started the Leonard Litz LGBTQ+ Foundation is to help support queer people (and our allies) right here in Connecticut. It can feel satisfying to donate to larger, well known national LGBTQ+ organizations— who do important work, to be sure—but you would be amazed at both the tremendous need there is right here in own backyard, and at the tremendous impact that relatively small gestures can have on so many of our friends and neighbors.

It can be daunting to see

what's happening in parts of the country and the world and to wonder what any of us can do to help. Fortunately, we can do so much to influence the communities where we live.

For many LGBTQ+ people, our community centers become an important part of our chosen families. They create a space where we all belong.

In New Haven, our Foundation was proud to provide a matching grant to help facilitate the move to a brandnew physical space on Orange Street, where we can all enjoy the New Haven Pride Center's commitment to accessibility and inclusivity. With a designated area for youth, a black box media room, and a rapidly expanding food pantry and clothing closet, the new Pride Center represents a symbolic resilience in the face of growing anti-LGBTQ hate. No longer are they hidden away in the basement. They are out and proud for the world to see.

Sometimes, visibility can make all the difference.

The Triangle Community
Center in Norwalk has been
around for more than thirty
years, with the mission of
empowering and advocating
for LGBTQ+ people throughout

Fairfield County and beyond. However, many of the people in Fairfield County who needed their services the most often aren't able to travel to Norwalk very easily. TCC was so close, yet so far away. Now, through a grant from our foundation, TCC has an opportunity to leverage partnerships with other nonprofits to expand their footprint in places like Stamford and Danbury. The vision of helping to create a thriving, inclusive world where all LGBTQ+ people are equal, safe, and celebrated requires going out into every community and meeting LGBTQ+ people where they are.

Like Bridgeport, for instance.

Last summer, volunteers with the Greater Bridgeport Pride Committee came together to put on the city's biggest and boldest Pride celebration ever. The weekend-long affair featured a Pride March, live performances, food trucks, art exhibits, a variety show, and a cabaret extravaganza. We at the Leonard Litz LGBTQ+ Foundation were thrilled to both support



LGBTQ[§] foundation

Our Foundation has awarded grants to more than 100 organizations during our first four years.

and attend. Bridgeport is Connecticut's largest city, home to a history as colorful and diverse as its people. Unfortunately, in one of the wealthiest counties in the United States, Bridgeport too often stands out for the wrong reasons, including high rates of poverty and under-resourced public services.

Yet none of this was on display during Pride. It was a celebration not just of the vibrant LGBTQ+ community there, but of Bridgeport itself. Yes, there are urgent and critical needs in the city, but those are not liabilities.

They are opportunities. Folks have long talked about the lack of a dedicated space serving the Greater Bridgeport LGBTQ+ community. Now the time has come to make it happen.

Last July, the
Leonard Litz LGBTQ+
Foundation announced a
commitment to partner with
members of the Greater
Bridgeport Pride Committee
to establish the Bridgeport
Pride Center, a permanent
community center focused
on creating safe and
empowering resources and
opportunities for LGBTQ+
people in Bridgeport

and environs. It was an ambitious goal, but today, just under a year later, we are thrilled to share that the Bridgeport Pride Center has been incorporated, with a beautiful space to call home on Elm Street, a dedicated and active board of directors, and a growing staff led by a dynamic executive director.

Our Foundation has awarded grants to more than 100 organizations during our first four years. Some of the work we are most proud of is happening right here in Connecticut. All told, we've committed more than a quarter million dollars in service to our community.. We invite you to visit our website to read more about these efforts, and to learn how you can take some time to research the LGBTQ+ Community Centers in your own communities. You'll be amazed and excited by the amount of good they can do with whatever support you can offer them. 🚺

Elliot Leonard and Roger Litz are Founding Trustees of the Leonard Litz LGBTQ+ Foundation.





2024 CONNECTICUT SUN THEME NIGHTS



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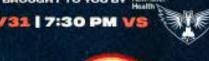


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Queering Birth Control

n Connecticut, we are lucky that birth control is relatively accessible compared to many other U.S. states. We can get condoms, birth control pills, and emergency contraception over the counter, and abortion rights are protected under state law. However, legal access does not always mean equal access for all groups. The LGBTQ+ community in particular is severely overlooked in discussions on birth control access. Healthcare providers and laypeople alike overwhelmingly assume that queer people do not need birth control. This betrays a very limited social view of gender and sexuality. Not sure what I'm getting at? Let me explain.

When talking about LGBTQ+ folks, the first thing that pops into many people's minds are same-sex relationships. Two cis men or two cis women in a relationship are obviously not at risk of unplanned pregnancy. Gay couples have long been the poster children of the American LGBTQ+ movement. But L and G are not the only letters in the acronym. We have B for bisexual, T for trans, Q for queer/questioning, and a plus sign to signify an expanse of genders and sexualities.

Bisexual folks' need for contraception is probably the easiest to conceptualize. People under the bisexual+ umbrella are attracted to people of more than one gender. This means a bisexual person may have relationships that could lead to pregnancy. For example, a bi woman who is having sex with a man is going to need access to birth control if she doesn't want to get pregnant.

Transgender people also use birth control. While gender-affirming hormones may reduce a person's fertility, they don't always eliminate it. Besides, not all trans people take hormones. Depending on who a trans person is having sex with, they may need contraception—for example,

if a trans woman is sexually active with a cis woman. The bottom line: If a person with ovaries has penis-in-vagina sex with a person with testicles, birth control is likely in order.

In addition to pregnancy prevention, hormonal contraception can medically help people with certain reproductive disorders. Heavy periods, endometriosis, and polycystic ovary syndrome are commonly treated with birth control. These issues can affect anyone with a uterus, regardless of gender and orientation.

Unfortunately, these misconceptions are not just the result of public ignorance. Many healthcare providers also disregard LGBTQ+ people's need for contraception. A 2019 study published in the American Journal of Public Health found that queer women seeking reproductive care were routinely presumed by providers to be straight, but if they disclosed their LGBTQ+ identity, they risked assumptions that they didn't need information on contraception. Given that the majority of messaging on the subject is targeted toward straight women, it's no wonder that healthcare providers have trouble thinking of queer folks as needing birth control.

Some participants in the 2019 study also reported negative attitudes on birth control from their peers within the queer community, especially for bisexual women who have sex with cis men. Gatekeeping in queer communities is an unfortunate reality that can stop conversations on pregnancy prevention in their tracks. The idea that contraception isn't "queer" extends to LGBTQ+ communities and acts as a social barrier to access for people who could benefit from it. Queer folks may

internalize these attitudes and not even consider contraception an option.

Some of these obstacles are formidable, but they need not stop you from getting the reproductive care you need! Start by educating yourself on the types of birth control available. A comprehensive overview of contraceptive methods would require a separate article, but I highly recommend conducting your own research before talking to a provider. Each form of contraception has pros and cons, so carefully evaluate each method's efficacy, potential side effects, ease of use, and accessibility. Planned Parenthood's website is an excellent source of information on birth control.

Once you've learned about your options, arrive at your medical appointment armed with information and ask as many questions as you need. Be assertive with your healthcare provider. Don't let them change the subject or gloss over it. Demand to be heard and have your concerns addressed without prejudice. If you aren't happy with your healthcare provider's response, you are under no obligation to see them again. You know your own needs better than anyone, and your healthcare provider should respect that and advocate for you. 🚺

—Kim Adamski

Finding Peace Through Presence

s it just me, or does the world seem like one big dumpster fire right now? That looming existential stress of "what if", on top of daily work stress, family stress, and the continued attacks on our community. If you're finding it hard to find peace or unplug from it all; congrats you're human! Part of our survival mechanism is to have a hardy threat response system that can mobilize immense physiological resources to get us out of life-threatening situations. Except, our bodies can't tell the difference between a lion looming dangerously close and a horrible story in

the news. So, what happens when it all feels like too much, and we're living in a state of constant stress?

The thing is, we need stress. Good stress helps us to learn, develop skills, become stronger both physically and mentally, and our biological stress response is how we've survived as a species. So, to experience stress is, well, human! However, if that "flight or fight" sympathetic nervous system response doesn't turn off and switch to our rest and recovery system, then the continued perceived threat triggers a cascade of reactions in our brains and bodies, that include:

sustained elevated blood pressure and heart rate. cardiac arrhythmias, sleep disorders, digestive issues, and increased psychological distresses like depression and anxiety. These, in turn, lead to a feeling of constant overwhelm. It's important to note that this is a totally normal human response to what's happening around us, and many of us are feeling it. The question is: how can we take time to nurture ourselves to keep showing up in our lives in a loving way.

Right now you might be thinking to yourself, "Yeah but how do I just ignore what's happening in the



Meghan Crutchley

world?" We don't, and we don't want to. To be able to build stress tolerance—the capacity to deal with stressful situations in healthy ways and not burn out or shut down—we have to actually bring more awareness to what's happening in our bodies as a result of our fear, real or imagined. It's when





we try to ignore or suppress the amount of stress and difficulty we are experiencing that we become powerless to our response to it.

As we start to become more aware, we'll still have our old patterns, but we'll be able to watch them with conscious, compassionate awareness. Then, we can start to practice adaptive coping mechanisms or behaviors that help us grow, heal, and move forward instead of numbing out and staying stuck. Practicing waking up to our own experiences gives us the power of the pause. Then we can act consciously.

Here's how we practice:

Take 5 minutes during a time when you feel safe and not triggered. Sit or lie down, eyes open or closed, and notice your breathing. Notice how the belly and chest expand and return, how your breath feels in

"If we practice compassionate awareness, and utilize the pause, we can experience stressors and still be able to access the resources within to help us get free from limiting patterns that are keeping us stuck."

your nostrils and the space around your nostrils, and allow your thoughts to come up, whatever they are. You'll quickly notice that your mind is a stream of thoughts, some of them tied to strong emotions. All good, we're not trying to stop the flow of thoughts; it's the nature of our minds to think. It doesn't mean you need to follow the thoughts. You can notice them and then practice returning your attention to your breath, letting the thoughts go on your next out breath. Exhaling has been shown to increase vagal tone, meaning a long slow exhale gets us into our parasympathetic, rest and digest, nervous system. That's what we want. You'll keep following thoughts and stories, and the practice is to notice that happening and keep returning to your breath. That's it. If at any point it becomes difficult or upsetting, just stop that

The more that we can practice being mindful in the present moment, the more we'll see how much power we give away to thoughts and emotions and how those patterns of behavior keep us feeling powerless. However, if we practice compassionate awareness, and utilize the pause, we can experience stressors and still be able to access the resources within to help us get free from limiting patterns that are keeping us stuck.

You may be thinking this is all very "woo woo," when it's actually science! The power of cultivating mindfulness is well-researched and has been shown to increase cognitive functioning, reduce risks of disease, and lessen symptoms of anxiety and depression because it turns off our threat responses. And all you need is your breath and your attention. To learn a few tips on ways to practice de-stressing head to www. habitqueer.com 🚺

-Meghan Crutchley



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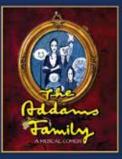
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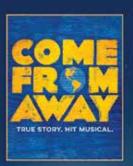


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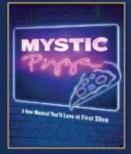




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Catching Up With Tony Kushner:

Looking Back and Seeing What's Ahead

By FRANK RIZZO

ony Kushner, the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning playwright of "Angels in America" and Steven Spielberg's go-to screenwriter over the last 20 years, is never short of opinions that are engaging, provocative and insightful. Whether writing for the stage, page or screen, Kushner's razor-sharp mind, verbal dexterity, and humor, has made every conversation a pleasure as well as thoughtprovoking.

I first interviewed the Manhattan-born writer in 1990 when he was in Connecticut for a Hartford Stage production of *The Illusion*, an adaptation he wrote of Pierre Corneille's seventeenth-century comedy. But that was just the beginning of his extraordinary career.

Of course, there were more conversations surrounding the developmental journey of *Angels*

in America, which began in the early 1990s. In 1994 at New Haven's Long Wharf Theatre, he returned to Connecticut to direct Naomi Wallace's In the Heart of America, and in 1998 Yale Repertory Theatre presented his play Slavs! He returned to the Rep in 2006 where he collaborated with Maurice Sendak for the one-act operas Brundibar and Comedy on the Bridge at Yale Repertory Theatre.

His collaborations with Spielberg began in 2005 with *Munich* and includes the films *Lincoln* in 2012, *West Side Story* in 2021 and *The Fabelmans* in 2022.

Kushner, who turns 68 in July, was in the news earlier this year defending director Jonathan Glazer's acceptance speech on the human suffering in Gaza when he received a Foreign Film Oscar for *Zone of Interest*.

But this time, our conversation was about the generational shifts

in the LGBTQ+ community: from the 20th Century eras of repression, visibility, liberation and AIDS, to the 21st Century eras of gay marriage, rights and protections.

"From our [past] struggles, you presumably want future generations to be free, not only of restrictive laws but of a kind of toxic environment that you yourself had to struggle as a young person," Kushner says. "There's a degree of [young people] taking progress for granted."

He acknowledges that this attitude is a natural part of the movement's achievement—but it is also one that calls for vigilance.

"You have to be aware that as a minority there is always the threat of your rights being trodden upon, and so you have a job to pay attention to where that threat might be coming from and do the things that are necessary





"Being able to write openly has also brought a wealth of great works, too. Craig Lucas' plays are extraordinary, and he was able to write openly about being gay, as was I, as was Larry Kramer, which was made possible because of the progress that had been made by people who came before us. Whether or not it was greater or lesser, I don't know."

to ensure that you—and the generations that come after you—won't be subject to oppression.

No political gains are permanent, he says. "Anyone who is a member of a minority of any kind —ethnic, religious, sexual preference, or gender — has to be continually aware, unfortunately."

CHANGING COMMUNITIES

Mention to him that when I was in Stockholm, I asked some friends who lived there where the gay neighborhood was, and they replied there was no gay neighborhood *per se*, that LGBTQ+ people were integrated everywhere throughout the city. On one hand, I told him, I felt pride that our community had reached that point of wide acceptance—but that I was also a little sad, too, at the loss of a neighborhood community.

"I feel that way every time I'm in Greenwich Village, and I go past what was the Oscar Wilde Bookstore," says Kushner. "On one hand you say, 'Great, you can now go into any Barnes and Noble and there's a fairly big lesbian and gay section, so why do you need a gay bookstore?' But back in the day when that bookstore existed it was kind of an amazing thing. It was a meeting place and a cruising place, and we miss that now."

Kushner spoke of a time when sex







was furtive, something that he hears young people today seek as they explore the Rambles or having sex in parks. "It's very retro," he says. "But in the past, these things happened under very unfortunate circumstances. You couldn't risk bringing someone to your apartment or you feared police entrapment. It all contributes to gay culture; just as oppression of any group's experience is likely to be manifest culturally, sometimes negatively, but very often, we make art; we make culture to figure out a way to handle the difficulties we face."

I mention that I felt some 20th century writers who were gay such as Tennessee Williams, wrote in an ambiguous poetic language that is missing today.

"Repression fuels a coded language," he says. "You wouldn't have *The Importance of Being Earnest* if Oscar Wilde could just have written about being gay. Tennessee's plays have to do certainly with the understanding

of the power on the powerless and the downtrodden and had great sympathy of the position of women in a male dominated society. It certainly obviously owes something to being an incredibly perceptive guy and to the fact that he was gay.

"You lose certain things, and you gain certain things. Being able to write openly has also brought a wealth of great works, too. Craig Lucas' plays are extraordinary, and he was able to write openly about being gay, as was I, as was Larry Kramer, which was made possible because of the progress that had been made by people who came before us. Whether or not it was greater or lesser, I don't know."

MEANINGFUL VOWS

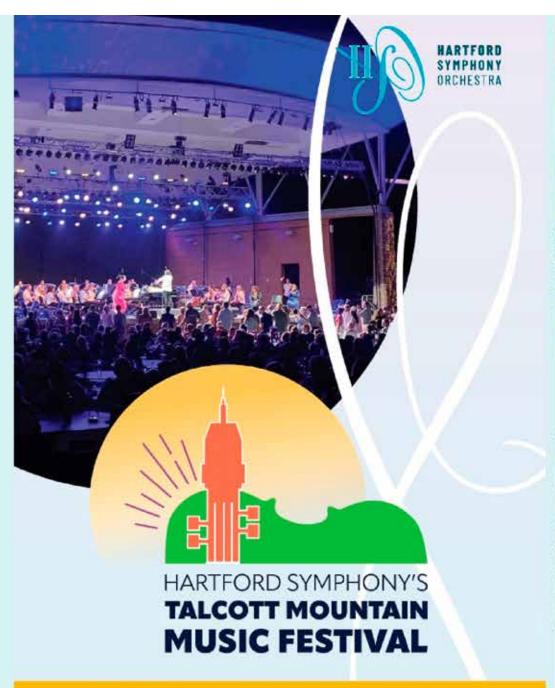
I took this opportunity to tell him how *verklempt* my now-husband and I were when he and his now-husband Mark Harris were the first gay couple to be featured in a "Vows" piece in the wedding section of *The New York Times* in May of 2004 when they had a commitment ceremony.

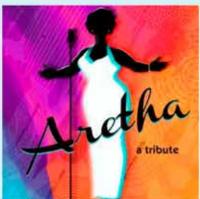
I still remember in the article what director George C. Wolfe remarked when Tony said, "I do." "It was the first time in his entire life he answered a question with two words," joked Wolfe.

"Mark is much more savvy about media stuff than I am," says Kushner. "I didn't even know at the time we were being interviewed for the story. I paid very little attention to the *New York Times* wedding pages, and I don't know it really registered to me that this was going to be the first 'Vows' column [about two gay men]. Of course, now I'm enormously proud and among our friends in New York City, there was enormous outpouring of positive responses."

But it was the story of the response of Kushner's father that I found most touching.

"My father was alive at the time, and he was at the wedding and was in the













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picture in the newspaper. A cousin of his—whom I had never liked—came up to my father a couple of weeks later after my father got back from the wedding, and this cousin sort of had a smirk on his face and said, 'Oh boy, I saw that picture in The New York Times, and I bet you were pretty miserable.' My father said, 'Actually it was one of the most beautiful days in my life,' and he never spoke to the guy again."

LATEST PROJECTS

Kushner says it has been a surprise to him that his collaborations on films have become a big part of his body of work and credits Spielberg "the greatest constructor of narrative in film history" as the reason for much of his work in moviemaking.

His next project with Spielberg is a film adaptation of Rachel Maddow's

eight-episode podcast, *Ultra*, examining the history of a seditious plot to undermine U.S. democracy 80 years ago.

I mention two projects that his name was attached to—such as a biofilm on Barbara Jordan and one other—in which Kushner says he is no longer involved. That goes also for a work he was considering writing about Donald Trump "which hasn't come together, and I don't know if it ever will. I would be very happy if the subject of Donald Trump is no longer of sufficient interest. Nothing would be better for the whole planet if he was gone and forgotten."

He did say he is working on two mini-series, one based on a 1969 teachers' strike and the other based on the non-fiction book on mental illness, He Wanted the Moon: The Madness and Medical Genius of Dr. Perry Baird and His Daughter's Quest to Know Him

by Mini Baird with Eve Clayton.

Ending our talk, I asked him—despite what he calls 'the worst crisis to hit the non-profit theater movement in its entire history"—what positive signs he sees or works he now admires.

Kushner named the Broadway production of Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *Appropriate*, and off-Broadway's productions of John Patrick Shanley's *Brooklyn Laundry*, and Itamar Moses' *The Ally*, which he called, "one of the most astonishing plays I've seen."

As for Kushner himself, the hope is that, to paraphrase Diahgliev's famous advice to Jean Cocteau designing for the Ballets Russe, he will continue to astonish us.

Photo Credits: Merie Weismiller Wallace/Universal Pictures and Amblin Entertainment; Alex J. Berliner for Universal Pictures.



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A Distinguished Young Bisexual Woman

College-bound Christina Vega of Suffield is an activist and aspiring journalist.

By DAWN ENNIS

ven before graduating from Suffield
High School on
June 8, Christina
Vega has spent
her Winter, Spring
and Summer touring Connecticut
as our state's winner of a national
scholarship program for high school
girls. In January, Vega was named
the Distinguished Young Woman of
Connecticut for 2024 and awarded a
\$500 scholarship.

It's a role befitting a young woman who has been outspoken and active in her hometown throughout her high school years, taking on the town's school superintendent last year when he pulled the plug on her student-led event for Black History Month, and writing an op-ed about racism in her hometown following George Floyd's murder, when she was but a freshman.

"I'm tired of living in fear," she wrote. "Tired of watching my community get slaughtered for doing absolutely nothing. The Black Lives Matter movement is rooted in the desire to put an end to racism and violence towards African Americans. When I say, 'Black Lives Matter,' that doesn't mean that your life isn't important. It means, Black lives matter, too."

Vega, 18, described herself in that eloquent, 2020 opinion piece as Afro-Latina. Although she and her family



have been active in Suffield Pride and other events since moving here from Rochester, N.Y., Vega told *CT Voice* it has been a difficult adjustment.

"It was definitely a change coming here and being one of maybe ten families of color," she said, noting that she has found acceptance as a bisexual. "There is actually a pretty large LGBTQ population here in Suffield, all high schoolers, middle schoolers, and so, adults tend to not get involved."

That's not been the case for her

parents, Jerry Vega and Cassandre Victor-Vega. They regularly attend Suffield Pride events with Christina and her siblings, Elianna and Elias. But something's still missing, Vega said: Other people of color.

"You look at the makeup of those events and it's like, 'Oh, it's just us here.' We don't really have allies from the town, you know? So, it's difficult to grow up feeling unsupported. And that's why I think that my family has been so important to my development, and being able to identify the way I do and to be proud of identifying the way I do. Because sometimes, going outside and feeling like you're one in a million and feeling like there's no one around, it really does take a toll."

Vega admits to having PTSD from her ruined plans for last year's Black History Month: the creation of a modern "Black Wall Street" at her school — in commemoration of that thriving African American community in Oklahoma, destroyed in 1921 in an eruption of racial violence. It was to feature local vendors of color and was being sponsored by her high school, until the superintendent withdrew his support. Ultimately it was canceled due to fundraising as well as the school not wanting the liability to host the event and preferred an outside organization to carry the liability.

"This all collapsed when they found out how I was advertising to



get donations, because obviously I couldn't pay for such a huge event by myself," said Vega. "I thought that seeing 'Black Wall Street' at school with all the businesses would bring about a sense of true community, a groundbreaking community, because if the event had happened, I think that would have been the most Black people ever at Suffield High School! I thought it would have been such a beautiful representation of the successes of our history, rather than just the tragedies that we tend to focus on."

"As someone who is in a PWI—a predominately white institution—I struggle with seeing myself represented in history positively and seeing the Black community shown in a positive light in our history classes," she said.

Fortunately, she has the opportunity

to serve as a role model for youth across the state as part of her role as the 2024 Distinguished Young Woman of Connecticut. The message Vega is tasked with spreading is, "Be Your Best Self."

Her selection has now taken her beyond the state line; Vega is representing Connecticut at the 67th National Finals this summer in Mobile, Alabama. After participating in personal development activities and community service projects, she and 49 other representatives from across the country are competing for the opportunity to become the Distinguished Young Woman of America for 2024, which also comes with cash scholarships.

"I am absolutely ecstatic," said Vega about this opportunity. "I want to show all Black and Latina women, as well as all queer women, that we deserve recognition, and praise for all that we do. We need to be proud of ourselves, and we deserve to be trailblazers in every field we enter."

Come fall, Vega is enrolled to begin her studies at the prominent historically Black college in Washington, D.C., Howard University. And just as she has in Suffield, she aims to make her voice heard.

"It is up to us as the LGBTQ community to find places where we are celebrated and not tolerated," said Vega. "And I'm willing to do the work to find those spaces over at Howard."

Before graduating, Vega said she worked to restart Suffield High's long dormant student newspaper. "To write is to have power, share your opinions and be loud about it," she said. "Because the louder you are, the harder it is to ignore."









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50YEARS!

PFLAG Turns 50

By KIM ADAMSKI

he year is 1969, and in New York City, tensions are running high in Greenwich Village. The NYPD has been repeatedly raiding the local gay bars, and the LGBTQ+ community were sick and tired of the harassment. On June 28, gay activist Morty Manford was enjoying a night at the Stonewall Inn when the police yet again began a raid on the bar. The patrons had had enough, and the now-famous Stonewall Uprising began.

This event intensified Morty's commitment to gay rights activism, and later that year he founded the Gay Activist Alliance. One day in 1972, he participated in a protest seizing the stage at musical parody group Inner Circle's annual dinner, where several anti-LGBTQ+ comedy skits were to be performed. A fight broke out, and Morty was beaten badly. Police did not intervene, and later his attacker was acquitted. This event pushed his mother, Jeanne Manford, to get involved in the movement. "I wasn't going to let anybody walk over Morty," she later said. She wrote a letter to the New York Post commending the publication for its coverage of the incident and stating, "I am proud of my son...and the hard work he has been doing."

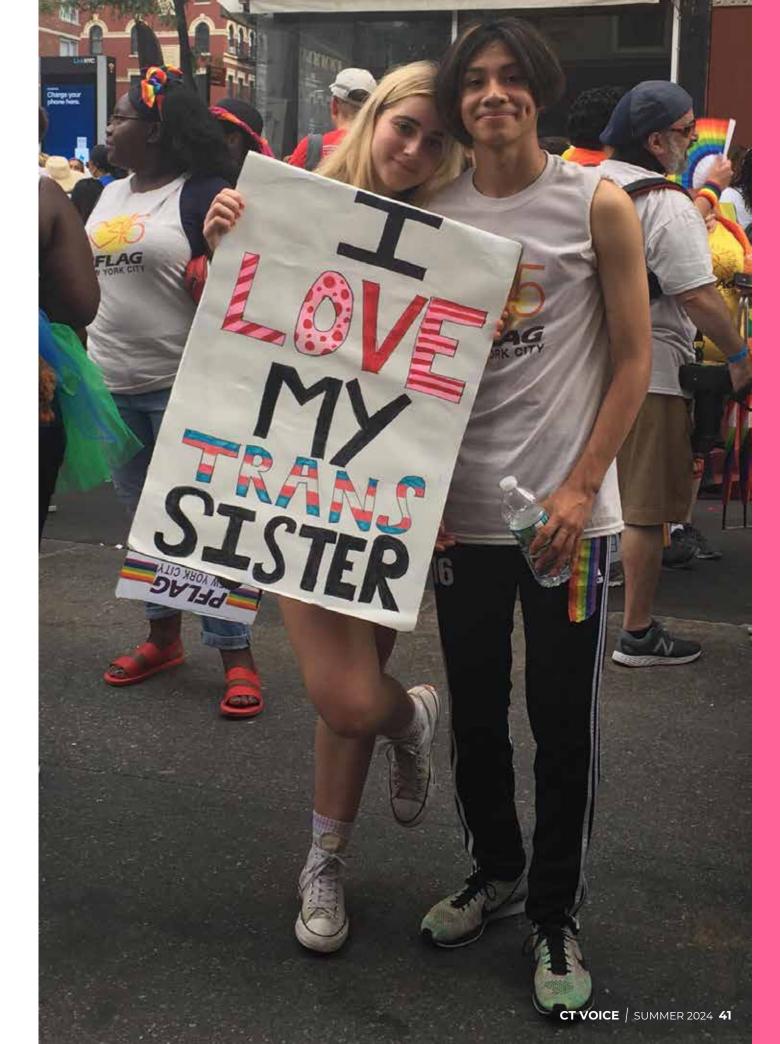
Jeanne became involved in gay rights activism alongside Morty, marching in the 1972 Christopher Street Liberation Day March. With Morty's encouragement, she and his father Jules held the very first Parents of Gays meeting on March 26, 1973. It was attended by about 20 parents, and word spread quickly. Before long, parents from all over the country were calling Jeanne, asking her how they could start groups like hers in their communities.

By 1982, Jeanne's meetings had blossomed into a national organization called Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Today, there are more than 350 PFLAG chapters across the United States. "Jeanne Manford...put it in people's heads that gay and lesbian people had parents, that we were somebody's children," says writer Dan Savage. His own mother credits PFLAG with helping her understand her son's sexual orientation and learn how to be more supportive. Former NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue has also attended PFLAG meetings. He says parents join to do "what parents should do, which is care for their kids and keep their family together."

Connecticut has PFLAG groups all over the state, including Hartford, Norwalk, Tolland-Mansfield, and Waterbury. PFLAG Hartford was founded in 1981 by Helen and Bob Brill. Helen, a longtime civil rights activist and high school teacher, moved to Connecticut with her husband after living in Los Angeles. The couple held the first PFLAG Hartford meeting at the West Hartford Society of Friends, a place of worship that still stands today. They served as the copresidents of the chapter until 1989. Today, Hartford's PFLAG chapter offers an annual Helen and Bob Brill scholarship to students entering higher education who are involved in LGBTQ+ advocacy, education, or support.

After the Brills stepped down from PFLAG leadership in 1989, Bob Calvin served as president of the Hartford chapter. He and his wife Marie helped the organization develop a board of directors and began a local PFLAG newsletter. Membership continued to grow.

In 1999, John and Becky Glezen became PFLAG





Hartford's co-presidents. In addition to their leadership of PFLAG, they also worked with local faith communities to create open and affirming churches and lobbied legislators to demand expanded LGBTQ+ rights. They served for 15 years before handing off the organizational presidency in 2014.

Today, PFLAG Connecticut has two co-presidents, Julieta Worley and Lindsey Pasquale. Julieta moved to Connecticut from Los Angeles in mid-2020 with her family. Just a few months prior, her oldest child came out as trans. The family was immediately accepting and supportive, but Julieta had never met a trans person before this and had lots of questions about how best to

support her child. After some research, she found PFLAG Hartford. It was exactly what she had been looking for: connection with other families in similar circumstances. Through the group, she received social and practical support and found the resources her family could use to help her child through their transition. Getting to know community members supporting their LGBTQ+ friends and family and how their loved ones were thriving assured her that her kid



Lindsey Pasquale

was going to be OK.

When the position of chapter president opened up, Julieta stepped up along with co-president Lindsey Pasquale. Lindsey, whose "queer history begins in 2014,", has an extensive track record of advocacy since she began transitioning. In addition to being co-president of PFLAG Hartford, she is the Northeast Regional Director for PFLAG. Outside of PFLAG they have participated in and facilitated panels at Yale School of Medicine and Middlesex Hospital. She moderates several online spaces for trans folks and is a published writer.

Lindsey (who uses she/they pronouns) is also a spouse and parent who encourages people to "create the world you want to live

in." She began living this motto when she joined PFLAG about a year after coming out as trans. PFLAG was a safe place for her. Lindsey found that they could make mistakes and focus on learning from them to better talk about and take action on trans issues, stepping into a facilitator role and subsequently becoming the organization's treasurer. When the president role opened up, Lindsey took on that responsibility along with Julieta.



One of Lindsey's strengths when working with people new to LGBTQ+ issues is that she's able to understand different viewpoints. Up until 2015, she was registered to vote as a Republican, and as a result can navigate the political divide that others have difficulty bridging. She finds herself able to reach out to and educate people that LGBTQ+ activists often consider "unreachable."

As affirming and educational as PFLAG has been for Lindsey and Julieta, both acknowledge that there are ongoing challenges. Even though PFLAG has been present in Hartford for many years, generating awareness for the organization has been challenging. Not everyone who could benefit from PFLAG meetings is aware the organization exists. Lindsey cites the need for "creating visibility while being invisible." Lindsey describes this as getting services to the

right folks while flying under the radar of individuals and groups who wish to intimidate LGBTQ+ groups and spread hate. It's a bit of a challenge, but Lindsey and Julieta seem up for the challenge.

Last year, PFLAG Hartford threw a 50th anniversary celebration, which was a great success. Past and present PFLAG members attended, including the oldest chapter president and members from years ago. Getting to 50 is a big accomplishment for an organization and requires constant evolution to meet the current needs of the LGBTQ+ community. PFLAG Hartford has weathered many storms. They have stayed strong in the face of the AIDS crisis, attacks on LGBTQ+ rights, and the COVID pandemic. With that level of strength, we can certainly expect to see them thrive for another 50 years.



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Pride 2024

By Jane Latus

o matter how small the town, local Pride events matter, and James Crocker will tell you why. "Kids need to know they're loved," says Crocker, who was only 15 last June when he formed Granby's Got Pride. In under two weeks he organized a Pride rally on the town green with more than 400 attendees.

Crocker got busy after a few parents complained about a teacher showing fifth graders a video produced by NBC Universal Kids. The 45-second clip featured children saying what Pride means to them: "Pride to me is my two dads," and "I have dolls. I love my dolls."

He had no idea what he was in for. The venom on social media from a tiny but loud number of adults was bad enough, but one man's threats caused

police to issue a restraining order. "I wasn't prepared for stepping into the limelight and getting all this backlash," he says. Arguably, a 15-year-old shouldn't have to, but thanks to his and others' persistence, a year later Granby's Got Pride is well-established.

The school was just doing its job, teaching history and inclusion, says Crocker—esepcially important for kids who aren't free to be themselves at home. He says, "It's very scary for kids to think they're alone."

Visibility, we are reminded, matters.

This year, even more first-time Pride events are happening in small towns across the state. *CT Voice* goes to press before all plans are finalized, so check with organizers for updates. Also check for newly-scheduled events on Facebook @ ConnecticutVirtualPride, and online at *CT Voice.com*.





Pride 2024

June 1 Pride Parade & Celebration Bethel

Noon- 5 pm at the Municipal Center. Sidewalk parade followed by flag raising, drum circle, music, food, artists, vendors, kids' activities and more in downtown Bethel. www.bethelctpride.com and @ bethelctpride on all social media.

June 1 (rain date June 2) Pups and Pride Parade + Art Show Canton

10 am- Noon at The Shops at Farmington Valley.

Organized by Canton Arts Council and Friends of Canton Dog Park to benefit New England Puppy Rescue. Parade starts at 10:30 at Canton Dog Park and ends at The Shops. Art show, kids' art activities, and treats for humans and dogs. Paraders are requested to register.

www.theshopsatfarmingtonvalley.com and Facebook @DogParkCanton

June 1 and 2 Pride in the Vines Colchester

11 am-6 pm both days. Food trucks, vendors, and entertainment. On June 1: Drag show with Summer Orlando and Barbra Joan Streetsand, and music by Carrie Ashton. On June 2: Sister Funk and Relic. www.priam-vineyards.com

June 1 Easton Pride

1 pm: Flag raising Easton Town Hall 1-3 pm: Visions of Pride Art Reception, Easton Library, and ongoing games, kids' crafts, ice cream truck, music and swag.

1:15: Pride story time, library lawn 3:15 – 4:15: Film short "Gay Youth", Easton Library Facebook @EastonCTPride

June 1 (rain date TBD) Hamden Pride Fest

Noon-4 pm at Town Center Park, Hamden.

With food, live music including Sister Funk, vendors, nonprofit and community organizations, kids' activities, and more. The event will celebrate the LGBTQ+ community and allies of Hamden and neighboring towns.

www.hamdenpride.org, Facebook @HamdenGayPrideFestival, and Instagram @HamdenPride

June 1 (rain date June 2) Middletown PrideFEST

Festival Noon- 10 pm, Pride March 1-2 pm, Pride Rally 2:30-4 pm, Two Pride Showcase Concerts 4—7 pm, and Tea Dance on Main 7 – 10 pm in Downtown Middletown, South Green (intersection of Old Church and Main Street), and Spear Park (intersection of William and Main Streets).

The state's largest Pride event annually draws approximately 20,000





people, 130 vendors, and 80 marching groups from all over New England. The festival includes events for all ages. Vendors and food trucks will be located on Main Street, and a 21+ area will offer alcoholic drinks with a view of the South Green Stage. Stop by the Middletown Pride Merchandise Tent to purchase Middletown Pride swag and learn what the organization does throughout the year.

www.middletownpride.org/pridefest

June 1 Ridgefield Pride in the Park

Noon- 3 pm at Ballard Park, with a 1 pm march around the park. Rain location is Yanity Gym.
Free and family-friendly, with music, games and activities for all ages.
May 23-June 16: "Kinky Boots" at ACT of Connecticut, 36 Old Quarry Rd., Ridgefield.

June 7, Pride Shabbat service, 6 pm at Congregation Shir Shalom.

More events to be announced.

www.ridgefieldctpride.com

June 1 Be You Festival Wilton

11 am- 4 pm at the Town Green at Wilton Center. The event will kick off with a flag raising.
Facebook @WiltonPride

June 2 Loud, Pride and Island-Bound Watertown Pride

Noon- 5 pm. Parade begins at noon at Moxley parking lot and ends with a festival at Saltonstall Park. DJs, performers, kids' activities, food, beach volleyball and more. www.watertownpride.com







June 2

Westport Pride Celebration

Noon-4 pm, Jesup Green (parking available at Westport Library). Celebrate Pride with local community performers, speakers and vendors. Food and drinks will be available. www.westportpride.org/events

June 3 Milford Pride Flag Raising

Noon at Milford City Hall. www.milfordctpride.org and Facebook and Instagram @MilfordCTPride

June 3

New Britain Pride Flag Raising

9:30 am at New Britain City Hall. Join the City of New Britain and special guests for the annual pride flag raising to kick off Pride Month.

Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @ NewBritainPride

June 3

Torrington Pride Flag Raising

9 am, City Hall. Additionally, each month: every Friday 6-8 pm, LGBTQ+ game night, and every first Saturday 10 am-3 pm, LGBTQ+ craft fair at Love It Vegan.

Facebook @TorringtonPRIDE

June 7 **Celebrate Pride! Storrs**

7 pm in Betsy Paterson Square (Storrs

Road and Dog Lane). Rain location: Mansfield Community Center, Storrs. Drag Queen Storytime with Mucha Mucha Placer starts at 8 pm, Movie The Prom at 8:30 pm.

Event includes giveaways, music, local resources, tie-dye-your-pride t-shirts, and other Pride-themed activities. Free, with a suggested donation of \$10 for the tie-dye activity.

https://www.facebook.com/ MansfieldYouthServices and https:// mansfieldct.gov/pride

June 7 Jackson Crash: A Goth-Rock-**Techno-Pop One-Person Musical**

Westport

7 pm at Toquet Hall (2nd Floor) Jackson Crash depicts a young man's journey from bullying and parental neglect to starting a family, becoming

a truck driver, surviving addiction, and searching for his own honest identityall while being chased by an insidious demon. Jackson is determined to find a community who will embrace him and a place to call home... but will he before the Creeper-Man catches him? www.jacksoncrash.com

June 8

Connecticut Sun's PRIDE Game

1 pm at the Mohegan Sun Arena, Uncasville. A special halftime performance is TBA. www.sun.wnba.com

June 8

Hartford Gay Men's Chorus

Heart and Harmony Gala Event 6-11 pm, Christ Church Cathedral, Hartford.

www.hgmc.org

June 8

North Haven Pride Celebration

Noon- 4 pm at the North Haven Town Green. Musical performances by Love n' Co. and Asher Kai. Bounce house, face painting, craft table and a variety of animals for kids. Craft vendors, food trucks, and community organizations. www.northhavenpride.org and Facebook and Instagram @ NorthHavenPride

June 8 (rain date June 9) Pride in the Park Norwalk

Noon-8 pm in Veteran's Memorial Park, Norwalk. Details to come. www.ctpridecenter.org/pride-in-thepark/

June 9

Danbury Pride

Time and location TBD. Performers, food, and vendors. Facebook @DanburyPride

June 9

"You Belong" Pride Celebration Darien

Noon- 3 pm, Tilley Pond Park. With live entertainment hosted by Drag Queen Boxa Crayonz, food trucks, speakers, local vendors, crafts, and music by DJ Soce. www.darienpride.org











June 9 HK (Haddam-Killingworth) Pride Killingworth

2-6 pm, The Killingworth Courtyard, 176 Rt. 81, Killingworth. Vendors and local organizations, a selfie station and crafts for family-friendly fun, and food and drink available from Bittersweet Bistro and The Barrelhouse. Drag performances by Morgana, Mini DeLuxe and Miss Frank. Live music by HK graduate Quinn Miller. Speaking will be Clare McCarthy of the Transgat Podcase and Celeste Lecesne, founder of the Trevor Project and The Future Perfect Project The last hour will feature a happy hour at The Barrelhouse.

Facebook @HKPride2024

June 9 Pride in the Hills New Preston

2-6 pm Pride Celebration at The Owl, Warren. Featuring the conclusion of a silent auction and showcase of auction items. Other Pride in the Hills events: Friends & Family Day, June 22 at Quassy Amusement & Water Park, and Date-TBA for SHAG with Pride at Spring Hill Arts Gathering. www.prideinthehillsfund.org/ww24

June 13 Hartford Yard Goats Pride Night 7:10 pm at Dunkin' Park. Yard Goats vs. Akron Rubberducks. www.milb.com/Hartford

June 14 The Greater New Haven Visibility Ball Hamden

6-11 pm at Whitneyville Cultural Commons. APNH (A Place to Nourish Your Health) and New Haven Black Pride present the Second Annual Greater New Haven Visibility Ball. Free entry and open to all. Free HIV testing available. Categories, prizes, and special guests TBA. Theme is "Night of 1000 Nostalgias". www.apnh.org and Facebook and Instagram @nhvblackpride

June 14-22 Out Film Festival Hartford

The 37th Annual showcase of LGBTQ+ films. At Cinestudio, Trinity College. www.outfilmct.org

June 14 Chic and Cheeky Drag Cabaret with Patty Bourrée Westport

7 pm at MoCA Westport. Irreverent humor, cocktails, and amazing libations for this 18-plus drag extravaganza. Patty Bourrée is a chic chanteuse and mouthy comedienne known regionally for her big voice, hilarious parodies, vintage style, and hilariously bad attitude. Benefit fundraiser for Westport Pride.

www.mocawestport.org

June 15 Enfield Pride Celebration

10 am-5 pm, 1295 Enfield St, Enfield. Rain or shine. A day of fun with vendors food trucks, bounce houses, information from community partners, musical entertainment, and closing the day with a drag show. enfieldpride.org/celebration, https://fb.me/e/4BCALHTty and @ enfieldpride on social media.

June 15 Furry Picnic Manchester

In the Wickham Pavilion at Wickham Park. Details online. www.furrypicnic.org

June 15 New Haven Gay Black Pride

1-5 pm at APNH (A Place to Nourish Your Health),
1302 Chapel St.
Celebrating five years of New Haven Black Pride. The theme is "Breaking Barriers". Vendors, food, and hours of live entertainment on stage. An afternoon of celebration and community.
www.apnh.org/events/ and Facebook and Instagram @ nhvblackpride





June 15 North Haven Pride Drag Show

Starting time TBD but likely late afternoon, at Twelve Percent Beer Project. Craft vendors and food trucks. Musical guest Carrie Ashton at 6 pm, Drag Show at 8 pm. Free entry. www.northhavenpride.org and Facebook and Instagram @ NorthHavenPride

June 21 Small Town Pride CT Hebron

5-8 pm: food and fun at Flour Girl Dooryard. BYOB. 5-7 pm: vendors and information at the American Legion Hall. Facebook @SmallTownPride-CT

June 21 Rainbow Rave (for Fairfield County High School students) Stamford

6 -10 pm at Fish Church.

Dance, with food and entertainment including drag performances, lip-syncing battle, and other activities.

Advance tickets are free with an RSVP, or \$10 at the door.

www.stamfordctpride.com and Instagram @stamfordctpride

June 22 (rain date TBD) Greater Bridgeport Pride

Pride March begins at 2 pm on the Broad Street Steps downtown.

Unity in the Park begins at 3 pm at Wheeler Park.

OUTWork LGBTQ+ Pride Exhibit opens at City Lights Gallery.

A community-based event celebrating diversity and inclusivity organized by Greater Bridgeport Pride, which seeks to raise awareness of the vibrant local LGBTQ+ community, offer a platform for creative expression, and connect the community to work opportunities for queer creatives.

www.bridgeportpride.com, Instagram @BridgeportPride, and Facebook @ GreaterBridgeportPrideCT

June 22 East Hampton Pride

10 am-10 pm in the village center. The third annual version of this event. Merchant specials, LGBTQ+ resources and activities for the whole family. Check website for updated list of events. www.easthamptonpride.com

June 22 Washington Pride

Noon-3 pm on the Washington Green, 6 Kirby Rd. Games, booths, food, music and more. www.firstchurchwashingtonct. org and Facebook @ FirstCongregationalChurchofWashington

June 22

West Hartford Pride Festival

Rally at 10:30 in Blue Back Square, Festival kick-off at Noon in Town Hall parking lot, rain or shine.

A family-friendly afternoon of joy and community, where everyone can see a piece of themselves celebrated and reflected back at them. Featuring talent across the spectrum of arts, culture, music, and performance, including newcomers Kentucky Gentleman and returning act Sister Funk.

www.westhartfordpride.org





June 23-30 Greater Waterbury LGBTQIA+ Pride

Neek

Check website for unspecified times and locations.

June 23: Drag Brunch, 18-plus entry, 21-plus to drink.

June 24: OUTstanding Art Crawl through downtown.

June 25: Flag raising and Mayor for the Day, 10-11:30 am.

June 26: Open Mic Night, 6-9 pm, open to all ages.

June 27: Youth Pride Day, familyfriendly events including third annual Youth Skate Night.

June 28: Transvisibility Day, featuring a film and panel discussion on the Black/Latin trans experience.

June 29: Pride Parade, Fest and Party, with Parade 10-11:30 am, Fest Noon-6 pm, and Party for 21-plus, 8 pm- 2 am, all downtown.

June 30: Drag Gospel Fest, 11 am-12:30 pm, Hopeville Church. www.greaterwaterburypride.org

June 23 A Tipsy Tea Party Watertown

11:30 am-2:30 pm at Commander's Mansion. Ages 21-plus. \$25 ticket includes drag performances, tarot readings, brunch bites, and tea. www.watertownpride.com

June 28 Milford Pride Ball

7- 11 pm at Milford Arts Council's downtown space. For ages 21-plus. Food, cash bar, drag, DJ and dancing. www.milfordctpride.org and Facebook and Instagram @MilfordCTPride

June 29 Milford Pride

Noon- 4 pm on the Milford Green. Vendors, music and food. The first of what is planned as an annual event! www.milfordctpride.org and Facebook and Instagram @MilfordCTPride

June 29 Suffield Pride

Details TBA
Instagram @SuffieldPride

June 30 (rain date July 7) Small Town Pride Granby

Noon-5 pm at Salmon Brook Park. A Pride Rally for Hartford County's more rural, conservative towns, aimed to increase visibility and advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusion.

www.GranbyPride.org, Facebook @ Granby'sGotPride and Instagram @ GranbyPride

Aug. 7- 11 Love Out Loud

New London Pride Week Aug. 7, 8 pm and Aug. 8, 1 pm: Queereoke, 32 Bank St.

Aug. 8: Education Committee Event Webinar, 7-11 pm.

Aug. 9: Drag Bingo, 7-11 pm, location TBD.

Aug. 10: Pride at the Beach, 11 am-5 pm, 98 Neptune Ave.

Aug. 11: BIPOC Cookout, 1-5 pm, location TBD. www.outct.org

AND COMING THIS FALL:

Sept. 7 New Haven Pride

At the new location of the New Haven Pride Center, at Orange and Crown Streets (downtown New Haven's 9th Square). Also check the website for TBA events in June.
www.newhavenpridecenter.org

Sept. 14

Hartford Pride Festival and Concert

Noon – 6 pm, Downtown Hartford. Organized by CLARO (Connecticut Latinos Achieving Rights and Opportunities). www.hartfordpride.org





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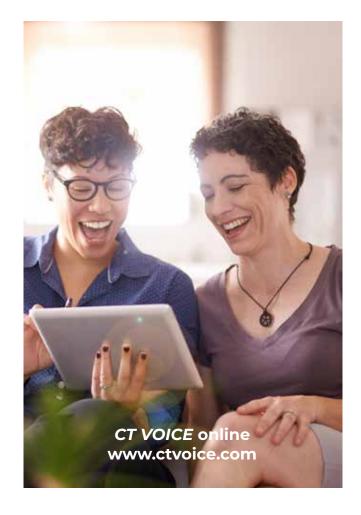
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'In the past, when I had thought of a flag, I saw it as just another icon to lampoon. I had considered all flag-waving and patriotism in general to be a dangerous joke. But that changed in 1976. The American Bicentennial celebration put the focus on the American flag. It was everywhere, from pop art to fine art, from tacky souvenirs to trashy advertising. On every level, it functioned as a message. After the orgy of bunting and hoopla surrounding the Bicentennial, I thought of flags in a new light. I discovered the depth of their power, their transcendent, transformational quality. I thought of the emotional connection they hold. I thought how most flags represented a place. They were primarily nationalistic, territorial, iconic propaganda — all things we questioned in the '70s. Gay people were tribal, individualistic, a global collective that was expressing itself in art and politics. We needed a flag to fly everywhere."

– Gilbert Baker, in his memoir *Rainbow Warrior*



Whose Flag is it, Anyway?

By JANE LATUS

f you're unsure of the value of symbols of pride, consider the power of symbols of hate: the pink triangle, the scarlet A, the noose.

Flags evoke a sense of belonging, tell a story, stir emotions and motivate action. Even how they're displayed matters: think half-mast. And where: like over the Connecticut Capitol building on Transgender Day of Visibility.

The number of LGBTQ+ flags reflect the extraordinary diversity of the community. It's virtually impossible to know how many exist. But here's a start, your guide to the most-used flags. Yes, there are a lot, but believe us, this isn't even an attempt to be comprehensive. Otherwise, you'd also see here flags for people who are metagender, neutrois, demiromantic, bxy, gxrl, rubber, pony, nation-specific, and more...maybe one being designed as you read this.

UMBRELLA PRIDE FLAGS

GILBERT BAKER RAINBOW PRIDE FLAG



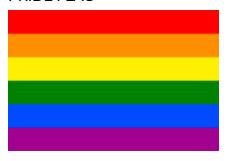
The original Pride flag. Harvey Milk and other San Francisco gay rights activists asked Baker (He was adept at designing and sewing and made his own drag costumes.) to design a symbol for the movement. He wrote that the idea came to him as he danced at the Winterland Ballroom, "We were all in a swirl of color and light. It was like a rainbow. A rainbow. That's the moment when I knew exactly what kind of flag I would make.

1978-1999 RAINBOW PRIDE FLAG



Demand for the Pride flag increased after Milk's 1978 assassination. Baker and the local flag manufacturer he worked with couldn't locate enough pink fabric, so he decreased the number of stripes to seven.

TRADITIONAL RAINBOW PRIDE FLAG



For practical reasons, Baker traded the turquoise and indigo stripes for one of royal blue. It made for easier, standardized worldwide production.

PHILADELPHIA PRIDE FLAG



This flag was commissioned by the Philadelphia City Council after some well-publicized instances of racism within the city's LGBTQ+ community. It debuted in 2017 and quickly took off, helped by such visible support as actor Lena Waithe wearing it as a cape to the Met Gala in New York City, giving the flag worldwide attention.



PROGRESS PRIDE FLAG



In 2018, artist Daniel Quasar added a five-colored chevron to the traditional flag, to represent BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) communities, bisexuals, transgender and nonbinary people.

QUEER PRIDE FLAG



Pink and blue represent same-gender attraction, orange and green symbolize gender nonconformance, and black and white represent agender, asexual and aromantic individuals. DeviantArt community member pastelmemer created this flag in 2015.

INTERSEX-INCLUSIVE PROGRESS PRIDE FLAG



Valentino Vecchietti, founder of Intersex Equality Rights UK, gave the Progress Pride Flag this update in 2021. "It's an LGBTQIA+ flag. It really is a flag for everyone," she said in a BBC interview.

FLAGS REPRESENTING SEXUAL ORIENTATION

ASEXUAL



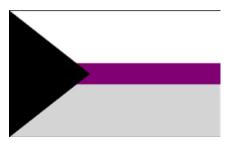
Asexual people do not experience sexual attraction. This flag was created by an online member of the Asexuality Visibility and Education Network community as part of a 2010 contest.

BISEXUAL



Activist Michael Page created this flag in 1988, using pink to represent samegender attraction, blue for oppositegender attraction, and purple to symbolize attraction to two genders.

DEMISEXUAL



Demisexuals experience sexual attraction only after establishing a deep emotional bond with someone. The flag is a modification of the asexual flag. Its designer is unknown.

LESBIAN



This flag has evolved over the years to this most widely used one. There are several versions, including the Sunset Lesbian, Butch Lesbian, Lipstick Lesbian and Double-Venus Rainbow.

OMNISEXUAL



Omnisexuals are attracted to all genders. Unlike pansexuals, gender influences the type and strength of attraction for omnisexuals. Artist pastelmemer (also designer of the Queer Pride flag) posted it online in 2015.

PANSEXUAL



Pansexuals have the potential for attraction regardless of gender. The flag's creator (identified as Jasper V) posted it in 2010 with the intention of distinguishing pansexuals from bisexuals.

POLYAMORY



Polyamory is romantic or sexual involvement with more than one person, with the informed consent of all. Designer Jim Evans used the Pi symbol to suggest an infinite number of possible partner combinations. Newer designs have different colors or feature a yellow heart.

POLYSEXUAL



A Tumblr user named Tomlin posted the first, darker-shaded version of this flag in 2021 to represent people who are attracted to multiple, but not all, genders.

FLAGS REPRESENTING GENDER IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION

AGENDER

Agender people view their gender as unidentifiable, neutral, or nonexistent. The black and white stripes symbolize absence of gender; gray, semigenderless; and green, nonbinary.

AROMANTIC



Aromantics experience no or little romantic attraction to anyone. Green is opposite on the color wheel from red, the color associated with romance. White symbolizes platonic friendship, and gray and black represent the sexuality spectrum.

BIGENDER



This flag represents those with two distinct genders. They may experience both simultaneously, or one at a time, varying from day to day or over time.

DEMIGENDER



Demigender people have a partial connection to a specific gender, or to the concept of gender. Its subsets include demigirl, demiboy, demienby ("enby" meaning nonbinary) and demifluid.

GENDERFLUID



This flag is for those whose gender identity or expression varies during different times and situations. Its colors represent femininity, masculinity, absence of gender and combinations of gender.

GENDERQUEER



Genderqueer activist Marilyn Roxie says she designed this flag to represent androgyny, absence of gender, neutral gender, and genders outside the binary. Additionally, lavender invokes queer sexual orientations.

INTERSEX



Intersex is an umbrella term for differences in sex characteristics or reproductive anatomy that don't fit the binary definitions of male and female. People are born with these conditions. Flag creator Morgan Carpenter of Intersex Human Rights Australia chose the colors because they are considered gender neutral. (For more about often misunderstood Intersex, see our article online about Liat Feller.)

NONBINARY



Nonbinary people don't identify as male or female, and their gender may not exist within the binary. They may identify as multiple genders, as a mix of genders, or as genderless.

TRANSGENDER



Transgender activist and Navy veteran Monica Helms designed this flag in 1999. "Baby" blue and pink represent the traditional binary colors, while white stands for those who are intersex, transitioning, gender neutral or with an undefined gender.

INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY FLAGS

INTERSEX-INCLUSIVE TRANSGENDER



This is one of a few intersex-inclusive variations on the transgender flag. Others include the Kaleidoscope Flag, and flags with various combinations of the Venus and Mars symbols.

QUEER POC



This symbol of the pride and struggles of people with both queer and racial identities took off during the Black Lives Matter movement. Its designer is unknown, but it first appeared at the 2019 San Francisco Pride.

TRANS QUEER POC



This flag is for this specific subset of the Queer POC community.

TWO-SPIRIT



This represents Indigenous Americans who identify as two-spirit, with genders outside of the binary. Precolonization in North America, at least 150 tribes acknowledged a nonbinary gender.



SUBCULTURE FLAGS

BEAR BROTHERHOOD



The flag uses the colors of real bears to represent inclusivity in this gay subculture of hirsute men often built like ... bears. There's also a trans bear flag and a nonbinary bear flag.

DRAG



LEATHER



The leather community shares the love of wearing leather clothing and accessories as an expression of masculinity, eroticism, love of biker culture—any or all of these in different combinations. Popular interpretation says blue stands for denim, black for leather, white for integrity, and the heart for love.

TWINK



The twink gay subculture challenges traditional interpretations of masculinity. Twinks are often attractive, young, slim and without facial (and sometimes body) hair.

When you look to the rainbows and more at your Pride celebrations this year, you'll see many of these flags and more—all celebrations of the rich diversity within all of our communities. V



Be Happy and Proud,



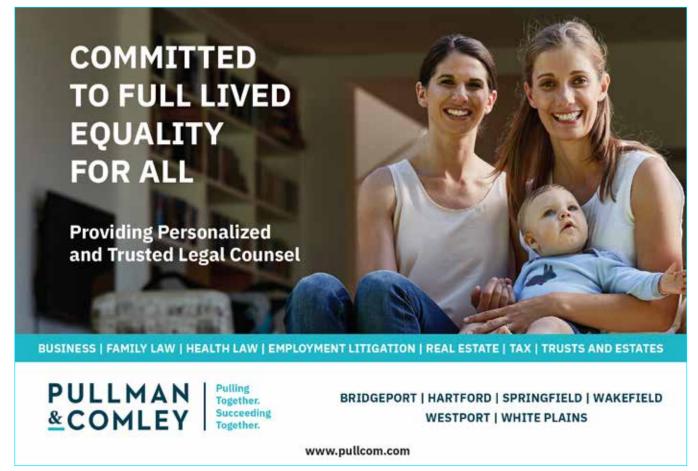
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The Connecticut Voice Honors—A Starry Night in Hartford

On April 27, Connecticut Voice lit up the Bushnell to celebrate the second event designed to honor the individuals and organizations in the state that have consistently demonstrated leadership, service, and dedication to the LGBTQ+ community in the state.

Ten awards were presented in what was a joyous evening, and with the addition of Broadway stars, and the incomparable Varla Jean Merman, it was a celebration to remember!

Thanks to all our sponsors who made the evening possible. And congratulations to all the honorees who truly lead the way for our community in healthcare, education, youth, sports, the arts and more.

Here are some of the highlights of the evening!

Connecticut Voice Honors 2024 Honorees

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

The Health Collective

PRIDE IN EDUCATION

Greater Hartford Academy

of the Arts Half Day

Program

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Governor Ned Lamont

COMMITMENT TO YOUTH
INITIATIVES
Styx Hatch

ADVOCACY AWARD

Mental Health Connecticut

TEAM LEADERSHIP AWARD

Connecticut Sun

HEALTHY EQUITY AWARD

Hartford Healthcare

PROFILES IN COURAGE **Dawn Ennis**

FUTURES AWARD

Greater Bridgeport Pride

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

AWARD

Douglas Lyons

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD
Jim Obergefell



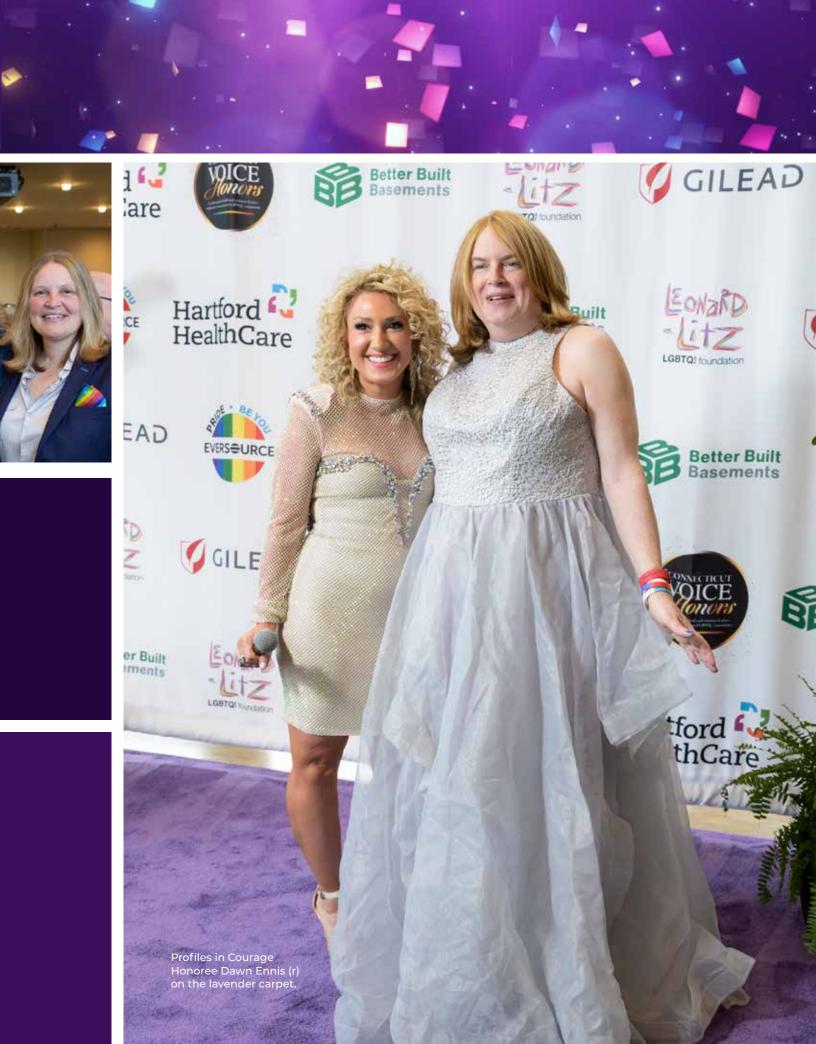




















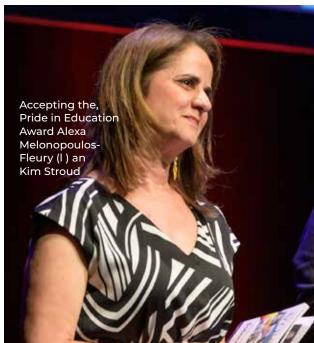




























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