



**BUFFALO
NIAGARA
PROUD
ALLIANCE**

ProudVoice



Premiere Issue!



Proud Voice

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Where DID We Come From?

by David Butler, President, Buffalo Niagara Proud Alliance

It is, with a great deal of excitement and gratitude, that I welcome you to Buffalo Niagara PROUD Alliance's first issue of Proud Voice. I want to introduce this first issue with a brief explanation of why this magazine exists and how this new coalition of amazing people formed.

For me, this new journey of community began 12 years ago when Lenore Pawloski and I took over what now is known as the LGBTQ Friends of WNY Facebook page. That journey with Lenore, working to clean it up and watch it grow into 4,800+ members, has been something I am proud of.

In that process, I met new people, was part of countless conversations and began to see some frustrating issues in our LGBTQ+ community. The LGBTQ family that I had come out to, the friends and peers that held my hand through the coming out rite of passage, was no longer the same. It was time to try and find a way to bring that community experience back.

There have been many factors at play: after the absolute joy of achieving marriage equality, the apparent need for some kind of community dissipated. We had achieved something monumental when marriage equality became a reality. We could finally have that house with a white picket fence some folks had always dreamed of having. We eventually separated, siloed and segregated into smaller groups. Our incredible, pride-filled achievements deteriorated into dating apps, smart phone online groups

and health care branding.

And yet there are still parents throwing their gay kids out. There is still violence in the school hallways and othering in conservative churches. As I write this our trans* family is being shamefully discharged from the military. The result has been a rash of depression, suicide and substance abuse; all symptoms of a lack of community engagement and loneliness... and there are few resources to put a stop to it. Among the largest of oversights, our elders have been left behind. The very people who fought for our rights and created the concept of pride have been abandoned with an unfortunate lack of respect or proper care. The more I talked to others in the community, including many grassroots LGBTQ+ leaders, the more I began to see not only a need for change but enough support to make it happen.

Over the summer of last year, I met in the backyard of transplanted Texas native and mentor Cannon Flowers, and with the legendary activist and organizer Carol Speser to brainstorm about how we might reimagine what pride is in Buffalo. These summer meetings in this beautiful garden were the beginnings of Buffalo Niagara PROUD Alliance (BNPA).

Sometime last August, the first meeting of what would become the Buffalo Niagara PROUD Alliance took place. We met in the basement of Jack Rabbit, and we were joined by representatives of Ron Piaseczny from Niagara Pride,

Jordan Velazquez and Amber Martinez from La Kultura, Levi Galbreath from WNY LGBTQ Chat Rooms LLC, designer Rafiq Flowers, Rev. Sue Frawley and I (from Pride Inside), and Mickey Harmon. There was a spark of something new here, a feeling we had not felt in a long time. I think even our waiter knew something exciting was beginning.

Since the November elections, there were rumors that Evergreen Health might be pulling back from Buffalo Pride events. An opportunity was forming that begged us to speed up the process. Sam Nordquist's horrific murder in Canandaigua added urgency. By February, we had grown to 19 organizations each with their own place in our community. We organized our first event, a community gathering to honor Sam. We packed Westminster Presbyterian Church and we knew we were on to something. Our long-term goal? To re-establish a centralized place to network, plan events, share marketing and celebrate our amazing and diverse community in a new way.

This magazine is a symbolic start to that process. I hope you will enjoy this first issue. It is full of smiles and real pride. The region-wide calendar of WNY Pride events, put together by Robert Kyne-Guzman, will enable you to check out a whole month of Pride events in one location.

Please also read over the fabulous list of volunteers that put our first issue together and the names of the current members and organizations of the Buffalo Niagara Proud Alliance. Just to be clear -- we are not a club. We are bound to grow.

In the coming months it is vital to be out and visible. It's time to participate in every Pride event that you can, especially the small town pride events that would love to have you. Follow us as we evolve in this new journey, as we create and produce together and as we support and recognize you. The one thing I know, everyone in this Alliance is PROUD and we want you to be too.

PV



La Cultura of WNY is a vibrant Latinx and BIPOC-led (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) LGBTQ+ organization dedicated to creativity, equity, and pride through empowerment, education, and entertainment. We curate culturally rich, inclusive spaces—from drag showcases to wellness workshops—that amplify Latinx, Black, Brown, and Indigenous voices, celebrating the full spectrum of our identities.

For La Cultura, LGBTQ+ pride means resilience, joy, and cultural legacy—especially for communities often sidelined in mainstream narratives. As a Latinx-rooted collective, we honor traditions of resilience while creating new futures where LGBTQ+ people of color thrive. Joining the Buffalo Niagara Proud Alliance was a no-brainer. When pride goes local, it becomes more authentic, more accountable and more powerful. We're inspired by the Alliance's grassroots energy and share its vision to reclaim pride as a movement—one that centers our Afro-Latinx, Indigenous, and multicultural LGBTQ+ communities. La Cultura is excited to deepen our collaboration with BNPA by mobilizing artists, activists and community leaders to co-create transformative spaces. We amplify grassroots partnerships and leverage our platform to elevate local LGBTQ+ talent, especially QTPOC (Queer and Trans People of Color) voices often underrepresented in mainstream pride movements.

For the magazine and the Alliance, we hope to ignite conversations, bridge divides, and prove that pride starts at home—in our barrios (neighborhoods), our art, and our collective fight for liberation.

Our motto? "Culture heals." Whether through a drag performance, a protest or a shared meal, we believe in the power of radical love and ancestral pride. Because pride isn't just what we celebrate—it's who we are.

PV



FREDDIE HERCURY

Freddie Hercury, they/them, is a local drag king who founded Transcend Nickel City and Rookie Knights. Transcend Nickel City is a grassroots mutual aid organization targeted at trans folks. Rookie Knights is a monthly showcase of local drag kings and things (drag personas for masc and non-binary performers). Name, age, pronouns: Freddie Hercury (or Brittany Gray, shhh don't tell anyone), 36, They/Them.

PV: Tell me about your queer identity. I prefer to identify myself as simply Queer, because I am complicated in both my sexual and gender identities and I prefer the freedom of fluidity that the word queer offers. Also, the sense of belonging. But if I find myself in a situation where specific labels would better serve me, I describe myself as a nonbinary bisexual (as in all genders).

Our trans masc community is so strong and mighty, but it's like people don't know we're here sometimes despite how much work we are doing for the greater queer community.

We, MMM, share many members with both of your orgs, Transcend Nickel City and Rookie Knights. Tell me about Transcend Nickel City, how did that come about? I love that we have been able to quiet-collab and share resources and people! I was at a point in my relation to my queerness and also the queer community of Buffalo where I felt like I had finally gotten my footing, and like I belonged, or at least had something legitimate to offer, and I came across the IG account for the Trans Closet of Hudson Valley. I wasn't aware of anything like that in Buffalo, and I decided I wanted to try to bring that kind of mutual aid to our

community. I also knew that I couldn't do it alone, so I put out a call for volunteers and very quickly found the handful of people who are working alongside me on the shared vision today. The idea gained traction almost immediately, and it became clear to me that Buffalo wanted more mutual aid opportunities. Right now we are focusing on the Trans Closet aspect of our work, but who knows where we will grow. Just being able to share space with people once a month in an emotionally vulnerable and safe atmosphere is something I've grown quite attached to.

So many people still don't know the term drag kings. You were at GLYS Con (a middle and high school convention for local GSAs) recently. At Man-Made Men's trans masculine panel, one of the kids said, "I just found out what a drag king is!" They were ecstatic. Could you define drag king for the people in your words. Well, in the same way that I'm attracted to the word queer for its open interpretation, I feel that any drag identity, regardless of gender moniker, is whatever the person portraying it says it is. But, for my own relation to the title, I believe that a drag king is someone who is using

any combination of makeup, costumes, story-telling, and performance of any kind to portray their interpretation (or the subversion) of masculinity.

Rookie Knights has the feel of a hidden gem despite its popularity. Lots of people know about it, but attending a show feels extremely personable. You've been able to foster a welcoming community for people just starting in drag, a place for them to experiment and try things while their community cheers them on. Tell me about the journey from inception to where it is today. Rookie Knights really are one of the most important things to me. It started because when I decided to try drag in 2022, there were essentially zero kings in Buffalo and nowhere for me to easily get onstage. I had to drive to Rochester and compete in the Cub Competition at Roar to find an opportunity for a new king to perform. I got involved in that performance circuit for a while, but once I got more experience, I, along with 716 Pride at the time, decided that Buffalo deserved to have opportunities like that Cub Competition as well.

We launched Rookie Knights as an opportunity for new drag kings to compete in a low stakes competition and learn how to perform. The beginning was rough. We had some issues with our first venue and moved to Hot Mama's Canteen, which was the best thing that we could have done. Our first one or two shows had a decent audience, but after that, we would have 3, maybe 4 people in the audience, including my own husband. Most of our performers in the beginning were coming from Rochester, because they had an already established king scene, so we weren't really even reaching the Buffalo community. We started doing workshops, and they were well attended, but it wasn't translating to bigger audiences. This went on for probably 6-8 months, and I started really questioning whether or not we should keep going.

I had pretty much taken over the full duties of running the program about 6 months in, and eventually 716 Pride decided to step away and focus on other things. Around this time, more people began showing up to our shows, and I felt like I finally had some momentum. Almost overnight, it was like a flood gate opened. Performer signups and audience attendance increased exponentially. Because of the diverse identities of the performers who attended our workshops, I also decided to open our shows up to all types of performers, but keep a focus on kings and things since they were still extremely underrepresented.

At the time of this interview, we have had exactly 50 performers involved in Rookie Knights, 22 of whom have won and gone on to do some really cool things, and the other 28 still actively competing. Our shows are currently booked out

through November of 2025 for both competition spots and experienced guest performer spots. We have full audiences. I have partnerships with the showrunners at the Underground to showcase each month's winner in one of their shows so our Knights will get more visibility and a paid booking. Rookie Knights group often gets booked as at other shows throughout the city. Rookie Knights now has a program, thanks to the help of Gendy Neutch, where people who want to be involved backstage can learn skills like tip collection, prop organization, and stage management as a stage jester. And we're currently wrapping up a six-month workshop series where I bring in experienced performers from the community to teach essential Drag skills people would need to get started.

Experiencing the growth has been a really beautiful thing, because as Rookie Knights has gotten bigger, it has attracted the people who align with its values. Our performers and audience show up knowing the assignment: be nice. Everyone who steps on our stage is not only accepted, but celebrated, for who they are and what they bring to our community. No matter where I go with my drag, I will always continue to invest in Rookie Knights.

Where do you see these organizations going? That's a lot easier for me to answer for Rookie Knights than it is for TRANScend. I have tried very hard to empower the members of TRANScend and make it a true collective, so I can't really say where it will go. But it's based on community need, and we are pretty solidly rooted in providing resources, joy and community, so I trust that it will go where it's called to.

I want Rookie Knights to continue to grow, possibly even outside of Buffalo. But the most important concern for me is to protect the culture that makes Rookie Knights so special to me and the people involved. I would love to facilitate Rookie Knights chapters in other cities, while also continuing to grow what we do here in Buffalo – think bigger workshops, an annual festival and dream big. But again, never at the risk of jeopardizing the current Rookie Knights culture and community.

What's your "rose and thorn" of the buffalo queer scene? Or of the buffalo drag scene? For specifically the drag scene, because that's where I'm most plugged in: My rose is that we are all so united against toxic behavior and that I feel so much love and support in our community that I haven't observed in other cities. Especially the way the queens have embraced the kings/things. The thorn is that I feel like we still have more work to do in appreciating, showcasing, and prioritizing the talents of BIPOC performers.

Who are your biggest queer influences or inspiration? Well, I don't think anyone would believe me if I didn't say

Freddie Mercury. I felt very drawn to him (and Queen) before I even knew I was queer at all in a way that only makes sense to me in retrospect. I love his blending of, or sometimes alternating between, masculinity and femininity in such an unapologetic way. And his powerful stage presence. But personally, I have been very influenced and inspired by my best friend from college, Emily Doscher, who has been at my side since the very beginning of my queer awakening. I quite literally wouldn't be who I am today, or maybe even here at all, if it weren't for her acceptance and shared journey.

What's one thing you wish you could tell people who are just starting to realize their queer identity?

There are so many of us that are just waiting to love you for who you are. No matter how scared you are, or how difficult things are for you now, there is a place where you can be the you that you don't even know you are yet. And don't be afraid to try things on. You never know what you are going to like, or what you won't, and that's okay. That's what's fun about being queer, the play and self discovery of it.

Where can people find you? (Socials or whatever)

I'm @freddie_hercury everywhere (but don't expect a lot out of my Tik Tok). Also, @rookie_knights and @transcendnickelcity on Instagram. **PV**

You have to
decide who you
are, and force
the world to
deal with you,
not with its
idea of you.

— James Baldwin



Gayme Nite is a queer monthly meetup for LGBTQIA+ folx in the greater Buffalo and Rochester area to socialize and game.

Join us at The Underground Nightclub in Buffalo every 4th Tuesday of the month for our monthly video game socials. If you're in Rochester, visit the Bachelor Forum in Rochester every 2nd Tuesday of the month. Everyone 21+ is welcome, and there's no cover. We'll set up various game stations around the bar such as Smash Bros, Mario Kart, Jackbox, plus the occasional old school retro console - so all you need to do is show up

You can also join us at Dice Versa in Rochester for our monthly board game, table top, and D&D One-Shot nights (2nd Wednesday of the month).

Feel free to look up "Gayme Nite" on Instagram or Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/GaymeNite>) for the most up-to-date info on our events or to sign up for the one-shots in advance. **PV**

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus (BGMC), a group for tenors and basses who want to sing for social justice, and our new yet to be named chorus for sopranos and altos who want to sing for social justice. LGBTQ+ pride is foundational to our institution and continues to be a cornerstone for all decisions we make. We strive to be the voice of pride in Buffalo and Western New York, bringing our message of inclusion and hope to those who need to hear it. We all have the same mission, even though we realize it in very different ways. Buffalo Niagara Pride Alliance gives us the opportunity to find when there is intersectionality between our groups and the events we have, so that we can have the biggest impact within the community. I am thrilled this alliance is happening! The BGMC has been around for almost 25 years and is experiencing a period of growth. We can use our marketing to help promote the Alliance, and we can literally lend our voices to cause when needed, by singing! The power of music is so strong - it heightens the meaning of the words we sing - it is such a privilege and honor to share the stage with these singers who send their message to our audiences from the depths of their souls. We connect, we heal, we grow. **PV**

¿Y QUÉ? (SO WHAT?)

Living Queer, Latino, y Sin Vergüenza (and Without Shame) in Buffalo: How La Cultura (the culture) of WNY is creating space for LGBTQ+ voices sin esconderse (without hiding)

For our gente (people), representation isn't just about visibility, it's about survival. In a world where minorities are silenced, rights are stripped away, and history is erased, standing together isn't optional, it's essential. You'd think the LGBTQ+ community, built on unity, would mean equality for all, but no. Even within our own spaces, Latinx, Black, Indigenous and Caribbean brothers and sisters still fight to be seen, heard, and respected. So we do what we've always done: we fight. We fight for our seat at the table, fight to make decisions that uplift our community and fight to ensure our culture isn't just included but celebrated. Because representation means more than just showing up—it means holding the mic, passing it to those behind us, and making sure the world listens.

And let's keep it real, finding where our childhood culture and queer identity meet? ¡Ay, bendito! (Ugh it's been a mess!) For so many of us, being Latino means growing up in conservatism, thick with religion and rigid roles. Salir del clóset (To come out of the closet) isn't just about coming out, it can feel like choosing between your identity and your family. And, you know what? We refuse to let go of either. La Cultura of WNY exists because we deserve to be proud of who we are, who we love, and the traditions that raised us. This is about living authentically, embracing the sazón (seasoning/essence) that makes us who we are: queer, Boricua, Dominicano, Afro-Latino, Caribbean and everything in between. Because at the end of the day, culture isn't just something we inherit, it's something we reinvent.

Aquí (Here), we don't just exist; we thrive. With cultural competency, we build alliances that respect our roots, challenge bias, and create spaces where everyone belongs. Representation isn't a favor, it's our right. So, whether we're at the table or flipping it, we're making sure nuestra voz (our voice) shakes the room. So, what do you say? Let's keep the fight alive: con orgullo y sin miedo (with pride and without fear).

Want to learn more? Follow [[@LaCulturaWNY](#)] for queer Latinx Buffalo stories!

PV



FIGHT BACK! NO BYSTANDERS!

By Carol Speser

Get smart on being an advocate. How we explain our values and beliefs is everything.

Not all our opponents hate us. Some just see things sort of differently. Beliefs are always on a spectrum. We can absolutely influence some folks. We can! How do you think our Queer Liberation Movement went from homosexuality being a mental illness, and an abomination to God, to marriage equality? A key part of changing cultural values is listening to our opponents and then thoughtfully responding in a way that respects where they are coming from.

It is not by responding with righteous anger and trying to win an argument! Your goal is to open minds and hearts.

While there are diverse strategies we can use to respond to the escalating discrimination facing queer people today, opening minds and hearts is something everyone can do.

All of us need to be ready to step up and speak up to our friends, our family members, our co-workers, our neighbors and colleagues. All of the people in our lives.

This is especially true when we find ourselves needing to advocate for our transgender family, friends and neighbors. Sadly, there is a great deal of ignorance, misguided information, outright lies and screwy ideas out there. It's toxic.

We cannot be silent. Put together your talking points. You can even write and rehearse your own short, poignant elevator speeches. Be ready to step up and speak up. One by one, we change the world. Do your part.

PV

Niagara Pride, Inc.

is a nonprofit agency providing LGBTQIA2S+ services, programming, and events in WNY; this includes but is not limited to grants to schools to fund diversity and affirming initiatives, scholarships to both high school graduates and undergrad/grad level students, LGBTQ+ training, sexual wellness programs, notary services, the only LGBTQ+ health fair in WNY, the WNY Pride 5K and several festivals. In Fall of 2025, we are opening the first LGBTQ+ exclusive youth drop in program in Niagara County.

As the only LGBTQ+ organization in Niagara County, it is our mission to ensure that rural communities in WNY have access to affirming and supportive programming and services in order to eliminate barriers to accessing such services in places like Buffalo and Rochester.

Transportation, costs associated with travel and admission, apprehension of going to unfamiliar areas, and other factors are just some of the obstacles faced in rural communities. We work hard to bring Pride to the rural

communities to create opportunities for everyone to be able to experience connection where they reside and to let folks know they are not alone in their corner of the world.

As one of the founding member organizations of BNQA, we are grateful to have had the opportunity to offer input into the formation of and direction of the Alliance. Niagara Pride will continue to advocate for the needs of Niagara County while also bringing back information and resources, while also challenging non-Niagara County based LGBTQ+ organizations and providers, to expand their services into rural communities.

Beyond being a source to find out what festivals are happening, we want to see information published about what affirming and LGBTQ+ specific critically necessary programs exist in Allegany, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Niagara, Orleans, Genesee, and Wyoming counties regarding health care, legal services, housing, transportation, senior living, youth services, financial wellness, and other areas that contribute to the overall health and wellness of a whole person. **PV**



WNY MAN-MADE MEN

WNY Man-Made Men is a grassroots, volunteer-run trans-masculine organization formed in 2023. We provide mutual aid, gender-affirming healthcare information, and a safe space to forge trans community bonds. We help allies break down stigmas and learn how to best support transmasculine people. We host events, panels, workshops, and monthly meetings. **PV**

Accept no one's vision of
your life, but define yourself.

— Harvey Fierstein



You deserve
a happy and
prosperous life.

— Queer Spiritual Truths

CLOSE THE GAPS

By Kristen Garcia

Close The Gaps is a mutual aid group based in Western New York focused primarily on assisting those marginalized members of our community who stand to be most impacted by the actions of the current federal administration; namely members of the LGBTQIA+ population, women, and immigrants.

We network within our community to connect individuals in need with emergency support, ranging from assistance with housing or food, to referrals for legal aid and everything in between. This includes connecting and collaborating with medical or mental health providers. We connect support professionals such as social workers.

CTG also aims to provide ongoing support for other local related groups, charities, organizations and projects who need volunteers, donations or other assistance. Our membership is composed of several members of the LGBTQIA+ community as well as true allies to our cause. We gather monthly via Zoom to discuss ongoing projects, though we hope to transition to some in-person gatherings as the weather gets nicer. If you would like to connect with us and contribute to our efforts, you can reach out via email to our admin staff at closeallthegaps@gmail.com for vetting.

Mickey Harmon wasn't just an artist—he was a force of queer creative revolution. As a co-owner of Good Stuff in Allentown, Mickey turned a neighborhood shop into a radical hub for LGBTQ+ connection, just steps away where his Intersect Art Festival would later erupt with live painting, drag and uncensored creativity. For seven years, Intersect wasn't just an event; it was Mickey's love letter to Buffalo with a one-day takeover where queer artists, musicians, and misfits could own their space, no apologies.

Mickey's fingerprints were everywhere: from his murals like Stonewall Nation Mural on Allen Street to his board leadership with Allentown Association and LGBTQ+ History Project, where he fought to keep the neighborhood's soul alive. For over a decade his murals like City of No Illusions mural at UB CFA, provocative exhibitions, The Male Erotic and Send Nudes, and leadership turned Buffalo into a canvas for LGBTQ+ visibility.

Mickey didn't just make art—he built ecosystems. As a Tom of Finland Foundation member and organizer of the Switch: Queer Bazaar, he championed erotic artists and marginalized voices. His art proved public space could be both protest and poetry. When he joined the Buffalo Niagara Proud Alliance, it was with that same ethos: pride should be by us, for us—no corporate gloss, no apologies.

Tragically, Mickey and his partner Jordan were taken too soon, but their vision refuses to fade. This year, we are continuing Intersect in their honor: activating Allen Street with live art, sober spaces, and the same electric inclusivity Mickey demanded. We'll spotlight local queer talent, just as he did, while pushing further. More BIPOC artists, more trans creators, more of the uncompromising authenticity of which he lived by.

Mickey's Certificate of Recognition from the City of Buffalo called him a "cultivator of LGBTQ+ life." Damn right. Our motto for Mickey—"Make space, take space". In this magazine and beyond, we're doing both. For him. **PV**



Pride isn't just a party — it's a declaration that we belong, that we matter, and that we won't be erased.

JACK KAVANAUGH

PV: Jack, you have become a voice for LGBTQ+ youth for years now. You have 16 years of experience with youth. Can you tell us how leading GLYS (Gay and Lesbian Youth Services) has given you a perspective on the needs and issues of the LGBTQ Community? What's different from when you started? What is different now? JK: When I first started, GLYS was the only visible resource for LGBTQ+ youth in Western New York. Over the years, our focus has shifted from crisis support and survival, but we have seen our role expand from just survival to helping youth thrive. Today's LGBTQ+ youth are more vocal, more informed, and more connected—but they're also facing a new wave of hostility, particularly around gender identity. The issues have evolved. While we've made progress with visibility and some legal protections, we're now navigating a political and social climate that's actively trying to roll those back. My perspective has shifted from thinking we were on a steady path forward to understanding that our progress is not guaranteed. We have to fight for it every single day.

Both of your moms are attorneys. Barbara Kavanaugh was the first openly gay legislator to run for office in Buffalo. How

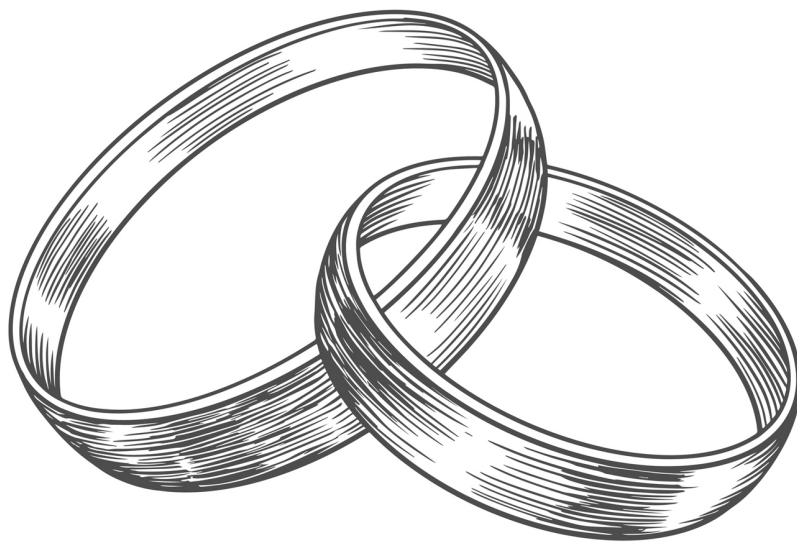
did growing up with them affect your career and the way you see LGBTQ+ rights and services? Growing up with two moms—especially ones as strong and trailblazing as mine—taught me early on that visibility is powerful, and advocacy is essential. My moms lived their truth at a time when that wasn't easy, and they instilled in me the value of standing up for others and using your voice. Seeing Barbra run for office as an openly gay candidate showed me that representation matters—not just symbolically, but because it changes policies and lives. Their legal backgrounds also shaped how I think about systems: how to navigate them, challenge them, and change them to be more just. My work in LGBTQ+ services has always been about both compassion and strategy—two things I definitely inherited from them.

The current administration has recreated a sense of fear that many of us thought was long gone or at least fading. Currently there are nationwide attacks on our trans family in legislation and socially. What are you doing and what can we do as a community to protect this targeted group? We are in a moment of urgency. At GLYS, we are expanding our mental

health programming, increasing support groups specifically for trans and nonbinary youth, and working directly with schools to ensure safer environments. But beyond programming, we are unapologetically vocal. Silence is complicity. We are advocating at the local, state, and national levels, and training our youth and allies to do the same. As a community, we must show up—for protests, for school board meetings, for votes, and for each other. We need to center trans voices, donate to trans-led organizations, and not allow fear to silence us. The fight is personal, and it's now.

It was recently announced that GLYS is taking over the Pride Center formally run by Evergreen Health. This is an exciting and big step for you. How do you see services changing? What will be the new direction of the Pride Center? This is a transformative moment. Taking over the Pride Center allows us to create a truly intergenerational hub for the LGBTQ+ community in Western New York. Our vision is to integrate youth services with adult programming, increase accessibility, and ensure that the programming at both organizations reflects the full spectrum of our community—racially, economically, and across gender identities. We're building partnerships with healthcare providers, cultural institutions, and grassroots activists to reimagine what community support looks like. Expect more collaborative events, expanded hours, and more direct outreach to rural and underserved populations. The new Pride Center under GLYS will be bold, inclusive, and rooted in both celebration and action.

What does LGBTQ+ pride mean to you in 2025? In 2025, Pride is about resilience. It's about honoring those who came before us, while fiercely protecting those who are coming up now. Pride isn't just a party—it's a declaration that we belong, that we matter, and that we won't be erased. It's love and resistance in the same breath. For me, Pride is also about connection—uniting across generations, identities, and movements. It's a time to recharge, recommit, and remind ourselves that joy is a powerful form of protest. **PV**



OUTspoken For Equality

OUTspoken For Equality is an organization that advocates, lobbies, protests and rallies for LGBTQ+ rights, protections and justice. OUTspoken was directly responsible for getting Buffalo Republican State Senator Mark Grisanti to allow us to educate him as to why he should vote yes to Marriage Equality and securing his affirmative vote that we all needed in order for Marriage Equality to be passed in New York. In light of the barrage of attacks against minority rights by the current administration, we all need to reactivate and re-energize our organizations/groups, find fellow minority organizations/groups, get new people and band together to take action. We have joined numerous committees and are guiding people who contact us to the right organization/group that meets the need they reached out for assistance. Our goal is to regain the connections lost after marriage equality passed and we all went on to live our best lives. Many of us failed to remember that history always repeats. Equal rights and equal protection under the law. Nothing more, and sure as hell nothing less. **PV**

You are fabulous,
period.



The WNY LGBT Events Page is a Meta and Twitter independent community resource, dedicated to promoting the vibrant and diverse queer culture of Western New York in one easily accessible location. Our goal is to provide a unified and comprehensive calendar of queer public events and activities, including drag shows, art exhibitions, nightlife, social gatherings and workshops. We also provide a directory of the different queer social groups that enable members of the LGBTQ+ community to discover and engage with opportunities in their area. By connecting individuals with groups and events, we aim to foster a stronger, more connected queer community in WNY. Please check us out at <https://tinyurl.com/WNY-LGBT-Events> and if you have any events or organizations we have missed, please email the information to WNYLGBTEvents@gmail.com. **PV**



The Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ Chat Rooms brings the community together for free without the stress of major social media platforms. Located on a Discord server, hundreds of WNY LGBTQ+ people have met up at board game events, hiking trails, video game nights, theatre productions and picnics. Bringing the community together has never been more important. Many seeking refuge in New York state have found friends in our chat rooms the moment they have arrived!

There's a main chat room for everyone to join in together, but there's also additional rooms specifically for gay, lesbian, trans*, queer, intersex, ace, agender, pansexual, genderfluid, Black/Indigenous/People of Color, neurodiverse, bear and leather communities. We also have resources where our community members address gender dysphoria, mental health recommendations, homelessness and other services targeting the most need for our community. There's sections

to share your photo, write a biography and tell people your own interests. Looking for forums? There's categories such as art, theatre, music, drag fans, food and cooking recipes, books and articles, workout routines, movies, board games, gardening, activism, photography, spirituality and more.

Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ Chat Rooms joined the BN Proud Alliance because our community deserves places to come together and celebrate our experiences. The success of BN Proud is our shared success. Our hope is to offer a virtual space that people can call home. You can join the chat rooms for free by going to <https://tiny.cc/buffalolgbt/> and downloading the Discord app. We're excited for the future of BN Proud. We seek the community of yesteryear by looking forward to the future and utilizing all of the resources of today. BN Proud is a beacon of hope when times feel dark and you need to find a community of your own. **PV**





Michael Farrow

One of Buffalo's Premiere Queer Voices

Michael Farrow is a solo artist, composer, and musician based in Buffalo, NY. Known for his powerful stage presence, soulful voice, and fearless lyrics, Farrow's music is as revolutionary as it is healing. As we launch our first issue of *Proud Voice*, we are proud to spotlight Michael as one of Buffalo's premier queer artists.

PV: What is your process for songwriting? Which comes first: the lyrics or the tune? MF: It depends. When I'm working solo, sometimes it starts with a riff or a feeling on the guitar. But when I'm with the band, it's almost always lyrics first. I follow a practice from **The Artist's Way** called "morning pages," and a lot of my songs grow from there. "Steal My Joy" came from a riff the band played in rehearsal, and "I Only Want to Love You" arrived fully formed — melody and lyrics all at once. It's not always the same, but it always starts with truth.

Where does your inspiration come from? Are there artists or activists that have inspired you? Ani DiFranco has been a huge influence — not just musically, but in how she moves between the personal and the political. I try to write songs that move from "me" to "you" to "us." That structure helps me write through things without getting stuck. There's something powerful about taking a personal moment and letting it bloom into something collective.

How is your music different when you perform solo as MQFarrow versus with your big band, Farrow? When I'm solo, I can control the pace and the intimacy. It's slower, more vulnerable, more emotional. I can talk about very specific local issues — it's hyperlocal and direct. But when I'm with the band, it's about joy. It's about making a space that feels good to be in. Billy Bragg said musicians aren't organizers, we're more like hosts of the party. And that's how I see the band — we're building a joyful, powerful space where people can come together.

How did a music career happen for you? Was music around you growing up? I grew up in church. I was part of starting a church in North Carolina that grew to be pretty big. Church music was all around me, but not much else — I didn't grow up listening to the Beatles or "Sweet Caroline," so I don't know most of that popular music. What I did know was harmony, emotion, and conviction. I also started a digital music class at a charter school, so

I've always had this impulse to create new spaces and try new things.

You write honestly about racism, homophobia, inequity, and many social issues. Are you writing from experience or observing the lives of people around you? Being that I'm a non-binary — which I didn't even have the term for until later in life — Black queer person, I've always inhabited this space of being the "other." Fatness and Blackness come together in a very important way for me, especially when we're talking about social inequity. One of the most common, overlooked forms of oppression is fatphobia. It causes immense heartache and pain, but we dismiss it by calling it a "health crisis," when in reality, "obesity" is a term rooted more in insurance schemes than actual health.

So when I see a comedy show or a movie, and suddenly there's a joke at the expense of someone's body size — or when I experience rejection because of my size — it's not just irritating, it's deeply hurtful. I know what it feels like to be denied opportunity because of how I show up in the world. That's why I write about these things — because they're personal, but they also reflect the world around me.

When I first moved to Buffalo, I took my neighbor to Carrabba's so he could get BB gun ammo. He brought the BB gun with him, and someone must have seen it in the back seat. As we drove from the Galleria Mall, I was pulled over and held at gunpoint on the I-90. Six cop cars, guns drawn, yelling, forcing me to throw my keys and lie on the ground. And once they realized there was no danger, they just let me go. But the fear — the trauma — stays with you. Because all it takes is one cop to be scared, and then you're dead. And it's justified. That reality informs everything I write.

You host open mics — are you still doing Gypsy Parlor? What interests you about these testing grounds? I love celebrating people making art. Any time someone gets up on stage — whether they're speaking, singing, doing poetry, whatever — it's a bold statement of being alive. Of choosing to live. Humans are unique in that we don't just adapt to our environment — we shape it, we build beauty into it. We create meaning by opening ourselves to one another and being willing to



Michael Farrow photographed by David Butler

risk embarrassment in public. That's magic.

I've been to open mics at hostels, at bars, in spaces where the talent level varies wildly — and I don't go because I love hearing bad musicians. I go because I love witnessing people try. People doing something brave and creative, especially when it's outside their comfort zone. That's powerful to me. It's a small act of bravery — a creation act instead of a destruction act. And that kind of bravery builds something real for the whole community.

As for Gypsy Parlor — yes, I'm still hosting there on Wednesday nights. And I hope people keep showing up and taking that chance.

We are living in strange, fearful, and uncertain times. How do you believe art and culture play a part in healing and finding a way out? The role of art and culture has always been twofold: to create space, and to speak truth — to power, and to the people. If your platform isn't large, you speak truth to your immediate community. That still matters. Right now, I'm leaning into hyperlocality — getting to really know my neighbors, showing up for each other in real ways.

Capitalism thrives on isolation. It wants us all struggling alone, trying to make ends meet in silence. But if we could be honest and vulnerable about what we need — and what we have to give — we'd see there's actually enough. There is abundance. But we're trapped in this myth of scarcity because we aren't working together. Art can help us remember that we're not alone. It can reconnect us to each other.

What does LGBTQ Pride mean to you in 2025? The first Pride was a riot. So if the first Pride was a riot, then that element of rebellion needs to still be present in every Pride that follows. Pride is about being visible — about being seen, being who you are, however you are.

It doesn't mean you have to be on a float in a jockstrap and fairy wings — though if that's you, do it. But for me, Pride is about authenticity. It's about showing up as your real self, every day of the year, and celebrating the fact that you've survived, that you've created something, that you exist as you are. Pride is not just a moment. It's an ongoing act.

PV



BNPA Community Calendar

Drag Shows

Four Mile Brewing

202 E Green St, Olean, NY

★ 12-Jul @ 7:00 PM

Hard Rock Cafe

333 Prospect St, Niagara Falls, NY 14303

★ 27-Jun @ 8:00 PM

Hot Mama's Canteen

12 Military Rd, Buffalo, NY 14207

★ 11-Jun @ 8:00 PM

★ 09-Jul @ 8:00 PM

Mr. Goodbar

1110 Elmwood Ave, Buffalo, NY 14222

★ 15-Jun @ 3:00 PM

Seneca Buffalo Creek Casino

1 Fulton St, Buffalo, NY 14204

★ 01-Jun @ 5:00 PM

The Gypsy Parlor

376 Grant St, Buffalo, NY 14213

★ 13-Jun @ 10:00 PM

The Terrace at Delaware Park

199 Lincoln Pkwy, Buffalo, NY 14222

★ 14-Jun @ 8:00 PM

Twenty Six Allen

26 Allen St, Buffalo, NY 14202

★ 23-Jun @ 8:00 PM

★ 30-Jun @ 8:00 PM

★ 07-Jul @ 8:00 PM

★ 14-Jul @ 8:00 PM

Drag Shows (cont.)

- ★ 18-Jul @ 5:30 PM
- ★ 21-Jul @ 8:00 PM
- ★ 28-Jul @ 8:00 PM

Underground Niteclub

274 Delaware Ave #2, Buffalo, NY 14202

- ★ 01-Jun @ 1:00 PM
- ★ 01-Jun @ 8:30 PM
- ★ 06-Jun @ 10:00 PM
- ★ 07-Jun @ 10:00 PM
- ★ 08-Jun @ 8:30 PM
- ★ 13-Jun @ 10:00 PM
- ★ 14-Jun @ 10:00 PM
- ★ 15-Jun @ 8:30 PM
- ★ 20-Jun @ 10:00 PM
- ★ 21-Jun @ 10:00 PM
- ★ 22-Jun @ 8:30 PM
- ★ 27-Jun @ 10:00 PM
- ★ 28-Jun @ 10:00 PM
- ★ 29-Jun @ 8:30 PM
- ★ 04-Jul @ 10:00 PM
- ★ 05-Jul @ 10:00 PM
- ★ 11-Jul @ 10:00 PM
- ★ 12-Jul @ 10:00 PM
- ★ 18-Jul @ 10:00 PM
- ★ 19-Jul @ 10:00 PM
- ★ 25-Jul @ 10:00 PM
- ★ 26-Jul @ 10:00 PM

Venu

75 W Chippewa St, Buffalo, NY 14202

- ★ 01-Jun @ 4:00 PM

Parades & Festivals

Intersect: A Pride Arts Festival

- ★ 31-May @ 12:00 PM

Buffalo Pride

- ★ 01-Jun @ 11:00 AM

Jamestown Pride

- ★ 07-Jun @ 9:00 AM

Newfane Pride

- ★ 07-Jun @ 11:00 AM

Hamburg Pride

- ★ 08-Jun @ 11:00 AM

Lockport Pride

- ★ 14-Jun @ 11:00 AM

Parades & Festivals (cont.)

Batavia Pride

- ★ 14-Jun @ 4:00 PM

North Tonawanda Pride

- ★ 21-Jun @ 11:00 AM

Niagara Falls Pride

- ★ 28-Jun @ 1:00 PM

Olean Pride

- ★ 29-Jun @ 12:00 PM

Community Events

Lockport Flag Raising

- ★ 02-Jun @ 12:00 AM

Fortunate Families Gathering

- ★ 03-Jun @ 6:30 PM

Interfaith Spiritual Pride Service

- ★ 03-Jun @ 6:30 PM

Spiritual Gathering:

Celebrating Pride Month

- ★ 05-Jun @ 6:30 PM

First Friday Art Show:

Pride Edition

- ★ 06-Jun @ 5:30 PM

The Comedy of Queerers

- ★ 06-Jun @ 7:30 PM

Pride Ride

- ★ 07-Jun @ 12:00 PM

The Comedy of Queerers

- ★ 07-Jun @ 5:00 PM

The Rocky Horror Pride Show

- ★ 07-Jun @ 8:00 PM

Pride Alliance Blood Drive

- ★ 12-Jun @ 12:00 PM

Gay Mart

- ★ 14-Jun @ 11:00 AM

Story Hour with

Prince Frederick von Herfuffle

- ★ 21-Jun @ 10:30 AM

LGBTQ+ Walk Through History

- ★ 28-Jun @ 10:30 AM

Fortunate Families Gathering

- ★ 01-Jul @ 6:30 PM

Dyke Liberation March

- ★ 06-Jul @ 11:00 AM

Social Events

Buffalo Bulldogs Monthly Meeting:

Daddy Pride

- ★ 07-Jun @ 9:30 PM

Buffalo Bulldogs Monthly Meeting:

These Colors Don't Run

- ★ 05-Jul @ 9:30 PM

Dyke Nyte Buffalo R!OT

- ★ 07-Jun @ 7:00 PM

Phases: Zodiac Party - Gemini

- ★ 20-Jun @ 8:00 PM

Phases: Zodiac Party - Cancer

- ★ 11-Jul @ 8:00 PM

Phases: Zodiac Party - Leo

- ★ 25-Jul @ 8:00 PM

GaymeNite Buffalo

- ★ 24-Jun @ 8:00 PM

GaymeNite Buffalo

- ★ 22-Jul @ 8:00 PM

Man Made Men Man Made Reads

- ★ 20-Jun @ 3:00 PM

Man Made Men Man Made Reads

- ★ 18-Jul @ 3:00 PM

Niagara Pride Silent Disco

- ★ 28-Jun @ 6:00 PM

Rainbow Seniors Mad Dash for Coffee

- ★ 21-Jun @ 10:00 AM

Rainbow Seniors Mad Dash for Coffee

- ★ 19-Jul @ 10:00 AM

LGBTQ+ RECOVERY

Thriving in Sobriety

By Jessie Powers

Recovery is not just about overcoming addiction but rather stepping into a life filled with purpose, connection, and joy. For LGBTQ+ individuals, this journey is deeply personal and often marked by extraordinary resilience. Despite societal challenges, the LGBTQ+ community has a long history of overcoming adversity, supporting one another and thriving. In recovery, that same strength becomes a powerful force for transformation.

The Strength of the LGBTQ+ Recovery Journey

LGBTQ+ individuals bring a unique depth of courage to recovery. Many have already navigated the challenges of self-discovery, coming out, and building chosen families. These experiences foster resilience - an essential trait in overcoming addiction and rebuilding a fulfilling life. Rather than focusing solely on struggles, it's important to celebrate the strengths that LGBTQ+ individuals bring to recovery:

Authenticity. Many LGBTQ+ people have already fought to live their truth. This ability to embrace authenticity translates into a powerful recovery journey, where honesty and self-acceptance become key to lasting sobriety.

Community Building. The LGBTQ+ community is known for creating strong, supportive networks. This sense of belonging and mutual support is a vital asset in recovery.

Creativity and Expression. LGBTQ+ individuals often channel their experiences into art, music, activism, and other forms of self-expression. Sobriety opens the door for even greater creative exploration.

Adaptability and Resilience. Facing and overcoming societal barriers fosters adaptability. Those who have navigated identity related challenges bring this same determination into

their recovery.

Building a Thriving, Sober Life. Recovery is not about giving something up, it's about gaining freedom. Sobriety allows LGBTQ+ individuals to fully step into their power, build meaningful connections, and create a life that aligns with their dreams. Here's how:

- 1. Creating a Vision for the Future** Recovery is an opportunity to reimagine life on your own terms. Whether it's pursuing education, advancing in a career, starting a business, or engaging in activism, sobriety provides the clarity and energy to build a future filled with purpose. Set bold goals and dream big! Surround yourself with people who uplift and inspire you. Explore passions and hobbies that bring fulfillment.
- 2. Finding Strength in Community** One of the most powerful aspects of LGBTQ+ culture is the emphasis on chosen family. Recovery is no different—it's about finding the people who truly see you and support your journey. Engage with LGBTQ+-affirming recovery groups like Crystal Meth Anonymous (CMA), or LGBTQ+ AA meetings like Rainbow Room or Friday Night Lights. Build connections with sober friends who share similar values and aspirations. Give back—mentoring others in recovery strengthens both you and your community. Seek volunteer work.
- 3. Embracing Joy and Self-Discovery** Sobriety isn't just about staying away from substances—it's about building a life that feels vibrant and meaningful. Many LGBTQ+ individuals find that recovery is a time of deep self-discovery, empowerment, and celebration. Rediscover passions that may have been lost in addiction. Engage in LGBTQ+

cultural events, pride celebrations, and community gatherings. Explore self-expression through fashion, art, writing, music, or performances.

4. Cultivating Mental and Emotional Well-Being

Recovery is a holistic journey. Mental health, emotional healing and self-care are just as important as sobriety itself. Seek LGBTQ+-affirming therapy, whether for trauma healing, self-discovery or support in transitioning. Practice mindfulness, yoga or meditation to stay centered and grounded. Develop routines that promote well-being, from exercise to creative outlets. Even the little things like brushing your teeth. All of these bring you back to you.

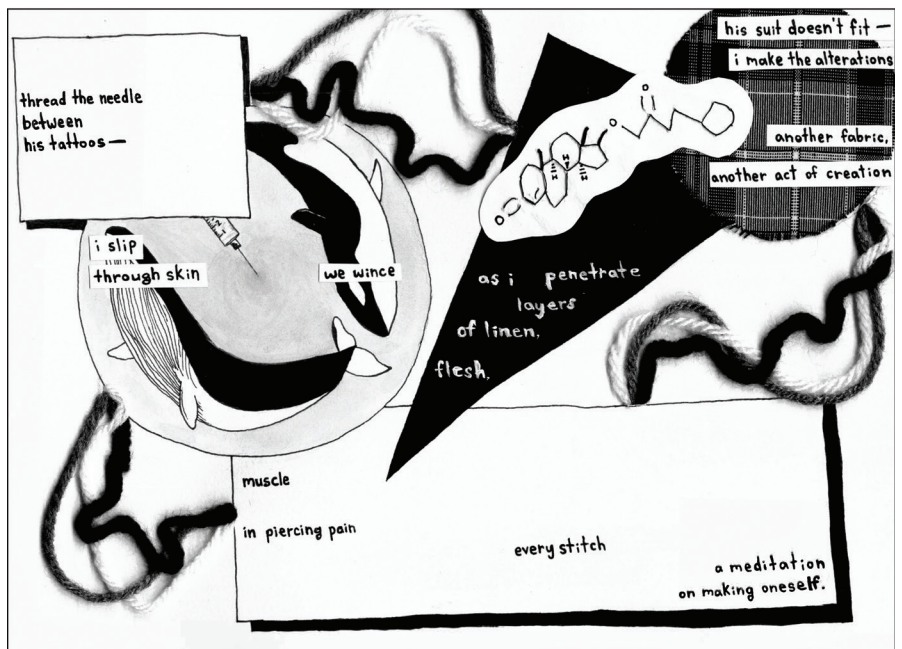
5. Celebrating Every Victory

Every step forward in recovery is a success. Whether it's one day sober, setting a new goal, or repairing a relationship, these moments deserve recognition. The LGBTQ+ community knows how to celebrate resilience—bring that same energy to your recovery! Mark milestones with friends and supporters. Keep a gratitude journal to reflect on progress. Share successes to inspire others on their journey.

LGBTQ+ Recovery is Revolutionary

Choosing sobriety is an act of radical self love. It's a declaration that your future matters, that your happiness is worth protecting, and that you refuse to let anything diminish your potential. LGBTQ+ individuals have always been at the forefront of social movements, fighting for visibility, equality and dignity. That same spirit carries into recovery. By embracing sobriety, you not only change your own life but also inspire others to believe in what's possible.

You are not just surviving - you are thriving. You are reclaiming your power. And in doing so, you are helping to build a world where LGBTQ+ individuals in recovery are seen, valued, and celebrated.





FINDING PRIDE IN A CRAZY WORLD

By Eliza Speese

When approaching the noise and chaos of lining up for the pride parade, we are awestruck by costumes, loving gestures, dogs in rainbow costumes and friends all gathered together. We embrace and yell HAPPY PRIDE at least 200 times, wave and smile at everyone. We blow kisses and hand out stickers, we run from the parade to see friends who were eagerly waiting to see us marching.

We take those 4 hours in like they are the highlight of the year to boldly say, I am queer and I love my community.

We use these experiences as a marker for friendships, we talk about memories of pride past and the joys the entire month brings. We try to take naps in between. We dance to the speaker blasting our queer tunes and hold hands. We invite family allies to celebrate with us.

We block out a lot of the hurt to be in the moment of joy. We stand firm in taking up space and support our fellow performers. We whisper when we see our friend's ex to avoid walking that way. We try to remember to take photos but are so wrapped up in the excitement, we wind up searching websites to see if they caught a glimpse of our joy. We sing Lady Gaga's lyrics, "don't be a drag, just be queen," at the top of our lungs. We love hard always, but pride parade allows us to unapologetically be loud and creative and thankful for the community we continue to build each year.

PV

BUFFALO NIAGARA PROUD ALLIANCE

David Butler

Pride Inside

Cannon Flowers

Community Volunteer

Rafiq Flowers

Artitude

Sue Frawley

Pride Inside/Life Span

Levi Galbreath

WNY LGBTQ Chat Rooms

Mickey Harmon

Intersect Fest

Amber Martinez

La Kultura of WNY

Jamila Nicolas

Dyke Nyte Buffalo

Micki Paige

Dyke Nyte Buffalo

Ronald Piaseczny

Niagara Pride Inc

Carol Speser

Rainbow Seniors WNY

Jordan Velazquez

La Kultura of WNY

Leslie Fineberg

Close the Gaps

Kristen Nieves-Garcia

Close the Gaps

Rob Kyne

Game Nite/WNY LGBT

Devon Shea

Dyke Nyte (Friend)

Rob Strauss

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Sara Alli

Intersect Fest

Ellen Leader

Outspoken for Equality

Garrett Martin

Westminster

Marcia Krebbs

Outspoken for Equality

Salem Browning

Eli Wood

Website designer

Evan Torres

Buffalo Bulldogs Inc

Eli

Man Made Men

Dino

Community Volunteer

Buffalo Bulldogs MC

The Buffalo Bulldogs M.C. (Men's Club) is a fraternal, non-profit social club for gay men ages 21+ who enjoy the look, feel, smell and mystique of leather and/or the leather kink lifestyle, that also promotes the camaraderie and brotherhood of those who are of similar mind.

Founded in 1999, The Buffalo Bulldogs M.C. has held a long-standing tradition of fostering kink education and history, as well as providing charitable offerings that support Buffalo's and the greater WNY's LGBTQ+ communities. The Bulldogs provide community building workshops and hosted bar nights throughout the year, which helps aid in their fundraising efforts to support a variety of meaningful causes locally. The club aims to carry on the traditions iconic of historic leather clubs, while also looking to the future and embracing younger generations into the fold.

The Buffalo Bulldogs partner with numerous organizations throughout the region, including the Buffalo Bears, the Imperial Court of Buffalo, Jones Pond Campground, Buffalo Pride, BUF-PAH, and Embrace WNY. In addition, the group occasionally travels throughout the Northeast U.S. and Ontario to participate in events that promote and bring visibility towards various kink and leather communities. The Buffalo Bulldogs are also the host club for the Jones Pond Campground's Leather Weekend every year, featuring the Mr. Jones Pond Leather Contest as well as BDSM/kink educational demonstrations and classes held by the club members. You can find the Buffalo Bulldogs at their barnights held at Twenty Six Allen on the first Saturday of the month, as well as at <https://www.buffalobulldogs.com> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/buffalobulldogs>.

PV

Dyke Nyte Buffalo

Dyke Nyte Buffalo is a mobile community event space created by dykes for dykes, other queer people, and our friends. Since 2023 we've met more than once a month all around Buffalo, NY. We have hosted costume parties, raves, drag shows, sober daytime stuff (like rock climbing, mud wrestling), and Pride. To some people, "dyke" is just a slur for lesbian; to us, a dyke is a person who's strong, fiercely queer and can be masculine, feminine, neither, or both.

Dyke Nyte is organized by founders Micki and Jam with help from lots of chosen family, local artists, and sibling organizations. Like all good dykes, we recognize that gender and sexuality are complex experiences. We treat each other with love and respect. We look out for others. We fervently welcome all queerdos, outcasts, and freaks because we know what it's like to walk into a room and feel like we don't belong there. Our community is made up of sweet and tough people from all different genders, cultures, abilities, and beliefs. We help each other identify and correct language and actions motivated by misogynoir, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, racism, classism and unfair biases in general. We believe in a future where dykes are liberated by way of the liberation of all people.

We support growing new and stronger connections within our community by providing in person events that celebrate queer joy. At Dyke Nyte, we embody the spirit of pride all year long. Unite with us in the freedom to express ourselves and love with abandon. Find out more about our upcoming events at www.dykenyte.org or @dykenytebuffalo on Instagram.

PV

REMEMBER?

PRIDE THROUGH THE YEARS

