

12-year-old leads first Annapolis Pride walk



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In steamy, rainy conditions Tuesday afternoon, a cluster of rainbows made its way through Annapolis.

The city's first official pride celebration— a walk from City Hall to the Loews Annapolis Hotel— started with a seventh-grader.

Twelve-year-old Claire Drapeau has been out as bisexual since she was in fifth-grade at Crofton Middle School. This year after telling friends, family and classmates she also identifies as gender-fluid, Drapeau wanted to join in on a pride celebration.

Instead of taking a trip to D.C. Pride as she planned, Drapeau told her mom she just wanted to walk around downtown Annapolis waving her rainbow flag and handing out stickers, which she saved up to buy herself.

"I wanted to show no matter who you are, love is love. You can love someone no matter your sexuality or gender," she said.

When Drapeau's mother posted on Facebook asking if anyone would join them, Mayor Gavin Buckley saw it and decided to join in.

Two weeks ago, Buckley declared June Annapolis' first pride month in solidarity with national celebrations. He hadn't planned an event until a parade set for 2019.

"We can't let our ruling principles be fear and greed. We need them to be love and pride," he said after the walk.

"Ever since I came to this town, I wondered why there wasn't a gay bar or an African-American bar. It always seemed like we were doing the same thing."

Proud minds think alike, and Buckley and Drapeau weren't alone Tuesday.

About 50 people joined them in walking along Green Street, Main Street, Church Circle and West Street donned head to toe in rainbow colors.

Two pride flags waved on Will Holman's bike as he rode with the crowd. As a lifelong Annapolis resident, he said he wants to be part of every pride event the city has going forward.

"It's a long time coming," he said. "We've never done anything like this in the 29 years I've lived here, and as a gay man I wasn't going to miss out."

Deirdre Hendrick, a trans-mom from Cape St. Claire working in the Army Reserve, brought her wife, Jessica, and their five children.

Jessica Hendrick wore a shirt she made herself with "I (heart) my trans wife" under a bright rainbow.



Jessica Hendrick (right) walks among her 5 children wearing a shirt she made in support of her wife, Deirdre Hendrick.

"Everyone's the same, and we're all trying to show that," their 15-year-old son Sam Hendrick said.

As Cathleen Lugo snapped pictures of the crowd her 9-year-old daughter, Olivia Zancajo-Lugo, carried their pride flag.

"Pride means equality, friendship and lots of hugs," Zancajo-Lugo said.

