

Q&A with fashion designer Christian Siriano, this year's Annapolis Pride Parade grand marshal



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Before he won Season 4 of “Project Runway,” launched his own fashion brand and dressed influential names from first lady Jill Biden to Oprah, acclaimed designer Christian Siriano was just a kid who [found inspiration in his hometown of Annapolis](#).

On Saturday, he will return to the city to usher in Pride Month as the grand marshal and keynote speaker for the fourth annual [Annapolis Pride Parade & Festival](#).

“I am so excited and honored to be asked and be a part of it,” Siriano told The Baltimore Sun in an email. “I really hope I’ll be able to be a voice for a new generation and for people to feel really welcomed and comfortable in Annapolis, which is always my goal when doing anything with Pride.”

[He was quite the catch](#), Annapolis Pride Board Chair Joe Toolan said in an [April announcement of the festivities](#), themed “Anchored With Pride.”

Since his days as a student at Broadneck High School and [Baltimore School for the Arts](#), Siriano’s designs have appeared in museums from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to London’s Victoria and Albert Museum, and graced stars including Angelina Jolie, Ariana Grande, Lady Gaga, Cardi B, Whoopi Goldberg and Jennifer Coolidge, among many others. He’s launched an interior design brand and returned to “Project Runway” as the Bravo show’s host and mentor.

Today, he splits his time between New York and Connecticut, but remembers his time in Annapolis fondly. Ever the leader, Siriano has tips for LGBTQ+ designers on making it in the fashion industry — and is ready to learn about how Annapolitans celebrate Pride.

The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

What was it like growing up in Annapolis, and how did it prepare you for fame?

I loved growing up in Annapolis! I actually got a lot of inspo being around the ocean and the beach. I also found a really wonderful group of creative people that I think really pushed me and inspired me to follow a career in the arts.

How do you use your platform in the fashion world to advocate for the LGBTQ+ community? And what's an example of your designs having a positive impact?

I've always tried to be my most authentic self, even when I was 21 years old and out as a gay man on television for the world to see and hopefully that inspired a young generation to do the same.

Dressing Billy Porter in a gown at the Oscars and him being the first man to ever [wear a dress at the Oscars](#) was a significant push forward in our industry that I think changed the perspective of how men and women can dress on a red carpet or in their everyday life.



Billy Porter arrives at the Oscars in a black tuxedo top and larger than life black ball gown courtesy of Annapolis-native designer Christian Siriano.

What advice would you give to aspiring LGBTQ+ designers looking to make a difference?

Just create what you love and what you're passionate about. I think everything else comes after beautiful work that you are very proud of. Also always be open to any customer from all walks of life no matter what.

Who are your LGBTQ+ style icons and role models?

In the beginning, it was really wonderful to be friends with someone like Andy Cohen who supported me really early on in my career. I am also so proud that I get to dress people like Billy Porter, Alex Newell, Dylan Mulvaney, Harvey Guillen, and so many more who really are changing the way we look at the queer community as fashion and style icons.

For anyone celebrating Pride in Annapolis: What LGBTQ+ destinations or activities should they be sure to check off their list?

This is actually my first Pride in Annapolis, so I am so excited to learn for myself where people love to go because when I was growing up there, there really wasn't a big community, so we had to find our own space to feel welcomed. I do remember, however, the owners of Tsunami were always so open to our community, which I'll never forget.

What are your favorite go-to hangout spots when you're in Annapolis?

I always have loved the sushi at Tsunami. The best crabcake is at the Boatyard [Bar & Grill]. O'Brien's [Oyster Bar & Seafood Grill] always has a good fun bar scene and Red Red Wine Bar [+ Bistro] is always a nice vibe.

If you go

The Annapolis Pride Parade and Festival takes place Saturday. The parade will begin at noon and the review stand will be at the Graduate Annapolis Hotel, 126 West St. The festival begins at noon and continues through 5 p.m. The event is free.