

# Annapolis celebrates making June LGBTQ pride month, plans its first parade



Joshua McKerrow / Capital Gazette  
Jeremy Browning, an organizer of Annapolis Pride, speaks at the party announcing that June will be Pride Month in Annapolis.



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A hotel bar where adults are mingling with drinks and loud music may not seem like the ideal place for a child to play.

For Bowie resident Rachael Martin, the party at Baroak in Annapolis was a rare moment she felt safe letting her 10-year-old run around.

Wednesday was Annapolis' Pride Parade kickoff event, where Mayor Gavin Buckley signed a proclamation to make this June LGBTQ Pride month for the second year in a row with June 29 being the city's first ever parade and festival.

With rainbow flags and bracelets at every table, Martin could let 10-year-old Xander run around and play without having to worry about what others might do. Xander came out to their class as non-binary at the start of this school year and hasn't felt understood by some teachers and classmates.



"In an environment like this, I'm really happy," Xander said. "There is no criticism at all."

Katie Connolly, a senior accountant for Annapolis, said Pride Month and the coming parade helps Annapolis feel like a safe space.

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"It's incredible to just be recognized. For the city to say, 'Hey, we see you,'" Connolly said. "When somebody of Mayor Buckley's status says he's going to do this, it brings a level of safety and comfort, and that's what we need most right now."

The celebration was also Max Huber's premiere as Annapolis' LGBTQ liaison, a change announced by the city last week. Huber is also the arts and military/veterans affairs liaison for the city.

Part of his role is connecting people who are struggling with resources they may not know about or have access to and stepping in when they're being discriminated against, Huber said.

"The city is headed in a better direction," Huber said. "I hate bullies. If kids, their parents, anybody, reaches out I will do whatever I can. And the administration will too. That's how much Gavin cares."

The mayor told the crowd the LGBTQ community was his first priority when he came to Annapolis, and wants to continue to advocate for it.

"We're about one love. There's nothing wrong with wanting to be loved, especially when we have this environment of toxic nationalism," Buckley told the crowd.

Sheren Riker, an Annapolis Pride board member, said she wants the parade to be an event for the entire community, not just its LGBTQ members.

"Here in Annapolis, we want to show we're your neighbors. We have your same aspirations," Riker said. "Bring your straight kids and your cisgender kids to our pride parade."

Since she organized last year's pride walk, handing out rainbow flags and stickers on a rainy day in downtown, 13-year-old Claire Drapeau hasn't had the easiest time. She's not as open in school about identifying as gender fluid. Recently, she said someone made up a rumor about her because they didn't understand her identity. So she's excited to have the pride parade as a safe space.

"We're the same people. People think we're not because we think differently than them, but they're wrong," Drapeau said. "We're not bad people."

Xander said after the parade they want to see more safe spaces for people like them outside Annapolis, "so Anne Arundel County and Prince George's and Fredrick and Cecil are bully-free."

"I am human and me and that's all I need to be," Xander said. "There is no need to be afraid of me."

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