

# Best Of LGBTQ D.C. 2023



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Staff reports

October 19, 2023



It's that time of year again when we pause to celebrate the best of our exceptional local LGBTQ community, from food to activism to religion.

This year's Local Hero award goes to the tireless Brent Minor for his many years of service to the community and his efforts to expand LGBTQ acceptance in sports. D.C. is bucking the trend of queer bars closing, as the city saw several new venues open this year. And our awards aren't limited to D.C.; we've again included numerous categories from Rehoboth Beach.

More than 4,000 nominations and 30,000 votes were cast in more than 60 categories for the 22nd annual Best Of awards. The Blade's Stephen Rutgers coordinated the process. Michael Key served as photo editor for the project. This year's contributing writers are Patrick Folliard, Tinashe Chingarande, Cal Benn, Lou Chibbaro Jr., Evan Caplan, Kaela Roeder, Michael K. Lavers, and Kevin Naff. Congratulations to all of the nominees, finalists, and winners. Thank you to our sponsors ABSOLUT, PEPCO, Shakers, Heineken, and Infinite Legacy.

## LOCAL HERO: BRENT MINOR

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Team DC founder credited with helping to launch Pride Night Out events



*Brent Minor is the Blade's choice for the 2023 Local Hero honoree. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

The selection this month by Washington Blade staff of Brent Minor as the 2023 recipient of the Local Hero Award comes a short time after Minor announced he was stepping down from his longtime position as executive director of Team DC, the D.C.-area LGBTQ sports organization.

"After more than 20 years of leading Team DC, first as its board president and then as the executive director, I have decided it is time to move on and retire from this part of my life," Minor said in a Facebook announcement.

"It has been a joy and a privilege to establish and grow this organization over the years and help make sports a more welcoming place for all participants," he stated.

Minor has been credited with helping Team DC become one of the nation's largest LGBTQ sports organizations, which currently includes more than 40 LGBTQ or LGBTQ-supportive sports teams or sports leagues as affiliated members.

Under Minor's direction, Team DC established the annual D.C. area Pride Night Out events in which about a dozen D.C. professional sports teams welcome LGBTQ sports fans to their respective stadiums or arenas to support the team and celebrate LGBTQ Pride during a home game.

Among the teams that work with Team DC to host the Pride Night Out games are the Washington Nationals baseball team, the Washington Wizards basketball team, the Washington Commanders football team, and the Washington Capitals hockey team.

The highlight of this year's Pride Night Out at the Washington Nationals in June involved Minor and other Team DC officials joining former Speaker of the U.S. House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), who threw the ceremonial "first pitch" to open the game as Nationals players and fans cheered loudly.

Minor has also played a lead role in helping Team DC establish its annual Team DC College Scholarship Program, which awards college bound LGBTQ high school student athletes \$2,000 scholarships to support their college education.



"While it is great to host 12 Pride Night Out events annually, we want to work with our pro teams to make sure that they are fully supportive of LGBTQ issues and not just when they want to sell tickets," Minor said in a 2019 guest column in the Washington Blade in explaining Team DC's ongoing mission.

In discussing the role of Team DC's more than 40 LGBTQ sports teams or leagues, Minor said, "The presence of healthy and well-organized sports clubs in D.C. helps make our LGBTQ community stronger and more stable. For many participants, their team adds a dimension to their life that a job or home just cannot fill."

Minor, an Alexandria, Va., resident who is originally from Charlotte, N.C., has been involved with several LGBTQ-related causes and organizations prior to and during his early years with Team DC., according to a write-up of his professional experience he provided to the Blade.

He served from 2000 to 2005 as a member of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS during the administration of President Bill Clinton, who appointed him, and President George W. Bush. He served twice as chair of the D.C. Bid Committee seeking to have D.C. become host in 2014 and 2022 for the Gay Games, the quadrennial international LGBTQ sports competition. The two bids were unsuccessful. He also served on the Gay Games Board of Directors from 2002 to 2008.

Minor served from 1996 to 2000 as Director of Community Relations and Public Funding for Food and Friends, the D.C.-based nonprofit organization that delivers food and provides other services to homebound people with HIV/AIDS and other illnesses. He served from 2006 to 2008 as Community Relations Director for the Whitman-Walker Clinic of Northern Virginia.

David Perruzza, owner of the D.C. gay sports bars Pitchers and A League of Her Own, which have worked with Team DC to help arrange for the sale of tickets to Pride Night Out games, expressed what appears to reflect the sentiment of many local LGBTQ sports enthusiasts of the work of Minor and Team DC.

"What an amazing night at Night Out with the Nationals," Perruzza said in a June 6 Facebook post reflecting on the Night Out at the Nationals. "Congratulations Team DC for putting on the event of the year and Brent Minor and your crew," Perruzza wrote.

"You are appreciated more than you will ever know," he stated. "I hope the community respects and realizes what an amazing individual you are."

Blade Editor Kevin Naff echoed Perruzza's sentiments in explaining the Local Hero award, which is the only Best Of award selected by Blade staff.

"The Blade's Local Hero honorees reflect the very best of our community," said Naff. "Brent's tireless devotion to LGBTQ causes has opened many doors along with hearts and minds. The community owes him our tremendous gratitude."

In accepting the honor, Minor told the Blade, "I'm incredibly honored to be recognized for this award."

## EATING & DRINKING

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### **Best Coffee Shop: Three Fifty Bakery and Coffee Bar**

1926 17th St., N.W.

Editor's Choice: Tatte Bakery & Café



*Jimmy Hopper of Three Fifty Bakery shows off his wares. (Photo courtesy of Hopper)*

Gay-owned Three Fifty takes home the top spot this year, dethroning Compass after a five-year run. The bakery has been in operation for 10 years on 17th Street, but is set to move to larger locale nearby on R Street. The neighborhood spot sells carb-forward specialties like scones, croissants, quiche, breads, muffins, and cookies, as well as coffee drinks. Owner Jimmy Hopper in a recent Blade article says that he first envisioned a cake shop but quickly realized the area needed a bakery and coffeeshop.

**Best Outdoor Dining: Hank's Oyster Bar Wharf**

701 Wharf St., S.W.

Editor's Choice: Le Diplomate



*Hank's Oyster Bar at the Wharf (Photo courtesy of Hank's Oyster Bar)*

Neighborhood institution Hank's Oyster Bar scoops up this award for its alfresco option on the Wharf. In October of 2017, lesbian chef and restaurateur Jamie Leeds opened Hank's Oyster Bar on the Wharf, building on her wildly successful original Hank's in Dupont (there is another in Alexandria). The sweeping vistas pair especially well with oysters and lobster rolls. Another of Leeds's spots, Hank's Cocktail Bar, is a two-time winner of the Blade's "Best Craft Cocktails" award.

**Best Restaurant: Crazy Aunt Helen's**

713 8th St., S.E.

Editor's Choice: Beau Thai





*Crazy Aunt Helen's (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Owner Shane Mayson's flamboyant restaurant Crazy Aunt Helen's takes home this coveted award for the second year in a row – and it's only been open two years.

"To be receiving this attention makes us feel like we are on the right path," said Mayson last year. "We serve American comfort food that we hope will make everyone feel like they've been given a big hug," says Mayson, who plates American food with a twist. Appetizers include items like fried green tomatoes, and entrees include chicken fried steak smothered in chicken sausage gravy. Many dishes are vegan and vegetarian. The restaurant is a supporter of several LGBTQ organizations, and hosts a range of events, including drag shows, book readings, a ladies' tea dance, play readings, bingo, and more.

**Best Brunch: Red Bear Brewing Drag Brunch**

209 M St., N.E.

Editor's Choice: Homme Brunch



*Desiree Dik performs at Red Bear Brewing Company. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Having taken home the Best Neighborhood Bar and Best Local Brewery awards last year, Red Bear Brewing now is awarded with Best Brunch. This gay-owned venue in the District hosts drag shows, trivia, and stand-up performances, among other events. It pours beers with suggestive titles like “Hefe Don’t Preach,” “OktoBEARfest,” or “Tall, Dark and Nutty,” to name a few. Its festive drag brunch, running monthly, pulls out all the stops with its themes, like Broadway, Chromatica Ball, and goth. Desiree Dik serves as host.

**Best Local Brewery: DC Brau**

3178-B Bladensburg Rd., N.E.

Editor’s Choice: Denizens Brewing Co.





**Brandon Skall** of DC Brau and **Chord Bezerra** present this year's Pride Pils. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)

Taking back the top spot (DC Brau won this category in 2021), DC Brau was the first business to bring back D.C.-brewed beer as part of the recent beer resurgence. DC Brau founders Brandon Skall and Jeff Hancock opened in 2011, now serving beers and hard seltzers. DC Brau holds the annual Pride Pils fundraiser to benefit SMYAL and the Blade Foundation. This year, DC Brau kicked off Pride with a party at fellow winner Red Bear Brewing with a party celebrating its Pride Pils.

**Best Local Distillery: Cotton & Reed**

1330 5th St., N.W.

Editor's Choice: District Made





*Cotton & Reed (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Last year's Editor's Choice won this year. Co-founders Reed Walker and Jordan Cotton became friends while working as strategists for NASA and the aerospace industry, turning a passion into a business. The distillery aims to learn from the best practices of the world's rum producers to create a line of distinctively American rums.

All fermentation, distillation, processing, and bottling is done on-site at the Cotton & Reed Distillery in Northeast DC's Union Market District.

They make a full line of rums, from white to gold to dark to coconut and spiced options.

### **Best Burger: Duke's Grocery**

1513 17th St., N.W.

Editor's Choice: Ghostburger



Washington Blade | Michael Key

*Duke's Grocery (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

The 2021 winner Duke's Grocery serves burgers with a British accent. With locations in Dupont Circle, Woodley Park, Navy Yard, and Foggy Bottom, this restaurant serves guests hearty portions of bar food. The burger has landed it on a whole bunch of lists, from Zagat to the Washington Post. Besides its famed Proper Burger, it also has a salmon, Impossible, and Wagyu burger. The Dupont location is currently closed for renovations.

**Best Ice Cream/Gelato: Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams**

1925 14th St., N.W.

(Multiple locations)

Editor's Choice: Ice Cream Jubilee



Washington Blade | Michael Key

*Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Located on 14th Street, and often with a line around the corner, Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams has a "uniquely smooth texture and buttercream body" in flavors like birthday cake and fruit crumble. It scooped up the award last year, as well. There are also locations in Arlington, Alexandria, Bethesda, Navy Yard, Yards Park, and McLean.

**Best Pizza: Andy's Pizza**

808 V St., N.W.

(Multiple locations)

Editor's Choice: 2 Amys





*Andy's Pizza (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

In the New York tradition, Andy's Pizza serves up pizza from stone deck ovens made of long-fermented dough, Wisconsin mozzarella, and California tomatoes. Andy's boasts seven spots across the area, including one in Shaw near popular bars Dirty Goose, Kiki, and Shakers.

The pizzeria serves slices in favorite options like pepperoni and white sauce, but the whole pies come in a range of flavors, including a Buffalo crispy chicken and a vegan pie with plant-based cheese.

"I am a local, born and bred in the DMV," says Andy Brown, owner and head pizzaiolo, after winning last year. "The D.C. community is a melting pot of the global stage, and winning an award as a local always feels like a victory for our local community. We were thrilled to even be considered, and over the moon to win!"

**Best Outdoor Drinking: Pitchers**

2317 18th St., N.W.

Editor's Choice: Dacha Beer Garden



*Pitches (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Winner of the 2021 Best Neighborhood Bar, Pitches launched in 2018 and bills itself as “a sports bar/restaurant for the LGBTQIA+ community where all are welcome.”

The sprawling building features several different spaces with distinct atmospheres, plenty of flat screens for sports fans, darts, video games, a dance floor, a subterranean lesbian bar, and two patios. The bar often plays host to drag performances, including appearances by RuPaul Drag Race contestants.

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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**Best Drag Queen: Evry Pleasure**

[@evrypleasure](https://www.instagram.com/evrypleasure)

Runner-up: Sasha Adams Sanchez



*Evry Pleasure performs at JR.'s Bar. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

This award-winning D.C. queen is a mix between pageantry, comedy, and dancing who delivers shows filled with energy, laughter, and glamour. At this year's D.C. Drag Awards, she scooped up the awards for best drag queen and best at large. Last year, she was named Red Bear Brewing Co.'s Miss Slay Them.

**Best Drag King: Molasses**

[@kingmolasses](#)

Runner-up: Flirty Rico





*Molasses performs at Drag Underground. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

In a Vox explainer video, King Molasses described themselves as “the sweetest, stickiest drag king you’ll ever meet.” Molasses fuses different elements of traditional Nigerian fashion with a southern cowboy aesthetic to deliver electric performances that leave guests salivating for more.

**Best Transgender Performer: Gigi Paris Couture**

[@gigipariscouture](https://www.instagram.com/gigipariscouture)

Runner-up: Baphomette



*Gigi Paris Couture captures the title at the 2023 Miss Perry's pageant. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

It's hard to miss Gigi Paris Couture when her glamour is so apparent even her eyes glisten with opulence. From voluminous long hair units adorned with colorful flowers to floor-length gowns that accentuate her Coke-bottle curves, Gigi proves that ostentatious is the beacon of top-notch performance art.

**Best Drag Show: Con Acento at JR.'s**

1519 17th St., N.W.

[jrsbar-dc.com](http://jrsbar-dc.com)

Editor's Choice: Red Bear's Drag Bingo





*Con Acento (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Since 1986, JR.'s has been serving some of the city's best cocktails. And it hasn't lost its touch when it comes to invigorating dance parties. Con Acento, a Latinx monthly dance party, features the hottest hits that'll have hips swaying and hands elegantly slicing the air.

**Best LGBTQ Bar: Little Gay Pub**

1100 P St., N.W.

[thelittlegaypub.com](http://thelittlegaypub.com)

Editor's Choice: Shakers





*The Little Gay Pub (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Despite being one of the newest gay bars on the block, Little Gay Pub has proven that it's on its way to becoming a mainstay in the city. Besides winning this award in its first year in business, the bar has made a name for itself, welcoming elite patrons, including former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who reportedly ordered a club soda before taking a bathroom selfie.

Its owners are business partners Dito Sevilla, longtime bartender and bar manager at Dito's Bar located inside Floriana Restaurant on 17th Street near Dupont Circle; Dusty Martinez, former general manager at the nearby gay bar Trade; and Benjamin Gander, former general manager of the other nearby gay bar Number 9.

"Little Gay Pub aims to fill the needs of the LGBTQ community by offering a new and upscale drinking and snacking venue," the owners said in a statement when the bar opened earlier this year.

**Best Bartender: Wyatt Warnick, Uproar**

639 Florida Ave., N.W.

Runner-up: Andrew Bunting, JR's



**Wyatt Warnick** (Photo courtesy of Warnick)

A quick Google search will show you that Wyatt Warnick is a well-known D.C. bartender with a following of more than 18,000 on Instagram. The burly bartender has a gaze that makes you feel welcome and at home. His Instagram explains his popularity with D.C.'s bar patrons as it's filled with shirtless shots and shower selfies. Blade readers responded with a resounding "Woof."

**Best Neighborhood Bar: Duplex Diner**

2004 18th St., N.W.

[duplexdiner.com](http://duplexdiner.com)

Editor's Choice: Number Nine





*Duplex Diner (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

What better place to cure your Sunday hangover than at Duplex Diner where the menu features hearty food options like a Belgian waffle that comes with fresh berries and whipped cream or the buttermilk biscuit oozing with sausage gravy? Duplex Diner is the place where you can “come pull up a chair” and enjoy the simplest of moments with friends and family.

**Best Happy Hour presented by ABSOLUT: Kiki**

915 U St., N.W.

[dcwannahaveakiki.com](http://dcwannahaveakiki.com)

Editor’s Choice: Annie’s Paramount Steakhouse





*Kiki (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Kiki undoubtedly has the smartest name on the street, and along with it some of the most fun events. This bar in Shaw neighborhood hosts weekly drag shows and a dance floor where guests can let loose and break out their best dance moves. Kiki has four different bar areas including a beer garden and a sports-themed bar area.

**Best LGBTQ-Friendly Bar: Dacha Beer Garden**

1600 7th St. NW

[dachabeergarden.com](http://dachabeergarden.com)

Editor's Choice: Flash



*Dacha Beer Garden (Photo courtesy of Designing the District)*

The name on everyone's lips when you mention beer is Dacha! This locals favorite has an open plan that makes it easy to guzzle a beer, or two, or three, with family and friends, and meet plenty of likeminded people doing the same. Above all, its menu is affordable with brunch drinks offered at \$5 each and weekly eats at \$10 each.

**Best LGBTQ Bar Outside the District: Freddie's Beach Bar – Arlington, VA**

555 23rd St. S, Arlington, Va.

[freddiesbeachbar.com](http://freddiesbeachbar.com)

Editor's Choice: Baltimore Eagle





*Desitiny B. Childs leads a show at Freddie's Beach Bar. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Freddie's Beach Bar is the place to be for the gays who love happy hour. Along with amazing food and drinks, the restaurant also offers vibrant karaoke nights, piano nights and thrilling games like beach blanket bingo. Anyone who's been there can attest to Freddie's being the place to be after work, blazer off, tie untied, heels exchanged for flats.

**Best Theater: Kennedy Center**

[Kennedy-center.org](https://www.kennedy-center.org)

Editor's Choice: Arena Stage





*The Kennedy Center (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

What's lovingly called the big white box on the river has been selected as our readers' favorite. The historic Kennedy Center has it all including symphony, dance, Broadway shows, and specifically queer-made shows like "The Night Garden: A Sartorial Celebration" on Oct. 25.

"The Night Garden" is a fashion show and small exhibition event celebrating the life and legacy of the first drag queen in America, William Dorsey Swann. The mission of this experience is to bring history alive for D.C. and celebrate queer history month by focusing on the legacy that is William Dorsey Swann, the first drag queen on record right here in D.C. This event is curated by D.C. drag queen and fashion designer, Pussy Noir.

**Best Theater Production: "seven methods of killing kylie jenner"**

Woolly Mammoth Theatre

641 D St., N.W.

Editor's Choice: King Lear, Shakespeare Theatre Company



***Tia Bannon and Leanne Henlon** in ‘seven methods of killing kylie jenner.’ (Photo by DJ Corey Photography; courtesy Woolly Mammoth Theatre)*

Once again, Woolly Mammoth Theatre continues to remain No. 1 with Blade readers.

Directed by Milli Bhatia, playwright Jasmine Lee-Jones’ two hander “seven methods of killing kylie jenner” has proved beloved by the fans. It’s about a lot of things, but murder really isn’t one of them.

Beneath heated discussions of white-skinned privilege, queerness, and body shaming, it’s mostly a story of friendship. Before playing at Woolly, the wildly titled play was conceived at London’s Royal Court Theatre in 2019, and then landed stateside for runs at the Public Theater’s Under the Radar Festival last month in New York. Then at D.C, the production proved a big success like so many like so many show shows heralded by Woolly artistic director Manuela Goyanes Maria.

#### **Best Live Music Outside of D.C.: Wolf Trap**

1551 Trap Rd

Vienna, Va.

Editor’s Choice: Merriweather Post Pavilion



*The Culture Club performs at Wolf Trap (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

For music alfresco, Wolf Trap continues to reign supreme with readers.

Comprised of various venues (the mainstage Filene Center, Children's Theatre-in-the Woods, and the Barns) set on 117 acres in Vienna, Va., Wolf Trap was established in 1966 and remains the only national park dedicated to presenting the performing arts. And like any performing arts center serving an increasingly diverse community, over time, needs concerning art, music, and style change tremendously.

Its president and CEO, Arvind Manocha, is gay. When he took the helm in 2013, he quickly noted the increasingly diverse communities making their homes in the area: "Whether Puerto Rican, Indian and South Asian, or LGBTQ+, we needed to reach out. It's important for us to be a mirror to the society around us, and anticipate the changes they'd like to see." And that's only gotten better.

**Best Live Music in D.C.: 9:30 club**

815 V St. N.W.

[930.com](http://930.com)

Editor's Choice: The Anthem





*9:30 Club (Photo by Farrah Skeiky)*

The venerable and great 9:30 club wins again.

Words from a former 9:30 club staffer and Blade editor: “Your favorite band plays at the 9:30 no matter what your favorite band is.” He continues, “Workers are great. The sound is great. It’s an intimate venue. The best place to see a concert, and they had the best gay parties back in the day, including Blowoff.”

Named one of the best live music venues in America by Rolling Stone, and dubbed “Venue of the Decade” by the widely read VenuesNow, the 9:30 is legendary. Since opening in 1980, the club has hosted everyone from the Psychedelic Furs to the B52s to Tony Bennett.

**Best Museum: National Air & Space Museum**

600 Independence Ave, S.W.

[airandspace.si.edu](http://airandspace.si.edu)

Editor’s Choice: National Gallery of Art



*National Air and Space Museum (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

The National Air & Space Museum is a favorite for tourists and locals alike. Complete with a planetarium, an Imax theater, numerous exhibits, and frequent events, there's something for everyone.

The museum is LGBTQ-friendly, having “QueerSpace,” a podcast available on their website that talks about the impact that LGBTQ people have had on space exploration and research, as well as science fiction. [“LGBTQ+ People”](#) is an entire subtopic on the website that brings you to many such stories. This museum is a great choice for when you need to escape the D.C. humidity, and you'll likely find yourself inspired.

### **Best Amateur Sports League: DC Front Runners**

[dcfrontrunners.org](http://dcfrontrunners.org)

Editor's Choice: Stonewall Kickball





*The D.C. Front Runners Pride Run 5K (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

For sporty queers looking for an athletic club and place to socialize, the DC Front Runners has become home to many. The DC Front Runners are the local chapter of the International Front Runners, a welcoming club for runners and walkers alike for 40 years.

In addition to runs, they host several social events throughout the year, including volunteer work, happy hours, and annual anniversary and holiday parties. The club is based in D.C., but has members worldwide.

**Best Local Winery: District Winery**

385 Water St., S.E.

Editor's Choice: Bluemont Vineyard



*District Winery (Photo courtesy of District Winery)*

District Winery describes itself as a modern, wine-focused, globally minded restaurant and bar on the ground floor of a working winery. The Blade's readers clearly have embraced the concept, voting it the city's best.

### **Best Local Professional Sports Team: Washington Capitals**

Editor's Choice: Washington Commanders



Washington Blade | Michael Key

*The Washington Capitals in the Capital Pride Parade. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*



## COMMUNITY

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### Best LGBTQ Event: Flower Factory

[@flowerfactory\\_party](https://www.instagram.com/flowerfactory_party)

Editor's Choice: District of Pride Showcase



(Photo courtesy of Flower Factory and Jakob Stronko)

This is the queer DJ collective's debut on this list. Flower Factory has been throwing events every second Sunday of the month since June 2021, and aims to create a more inclusive LGBTQ+ nightlife scene in the District. The group throws parties at several different venues in the area, including As You Are, Zebbie's Garden and Black Cat. The music showcased at Flower Factory parties ranges from techno, pop, hip-hop and house, and attracts hundreds of guests. Typically beginning in the afternoon and ending in the early evening, it's a way to end the weekend and begin the week with a celebratory tone.

### Best Pride Outside of DC: Annapolis Pride

[annapolispride.org](https://annapolispride.org)

Editor's Choice: Baltimore Pride



*Annapolis Pride (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

For the second year in a row, Annapolis Pride wins best Pride outside of D.C. Founded in the spring of 2018, a group of Annapolis locals decided it was about time the city had its own Pride event, just like Baltimore and D.C. Its first festival officially kicked off in 2019 and attracted more than 6,000 attendees. The city will celebrate its fourth Annapolis Pride Parade and Festival in June 2024.

### **Best Day Trip: Annapolis**

[visitannapolis.org](https://visitannapolis.org)

Editor's Choice: Harper's Ferry





*Annapolis, Md. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Next time you need a quick getaway, check out the endless activities in Maryland's charming capital city on the Chesapeake. Check out the famous historical landmarks like the Maryland State House and St. Anne's Church. Explore the plethora of antique shops like Blue Crab Antiques and West Annapolis Antiques. And you can't visit without indulging in seafood dining spots like Cantler's and O'Learys Seafood. There are also several gardens and parks, like Broadneck Park (613 College Pkwy) or the Chase Home Garden (22 Maryland Ave.) where you can unplug and enjoy a stroll.

**Best Clergy: Bishop Allyson Abrams**

Runner-up: Rev. Ashley Goff



*Bishop **Allyson Abrams** officiates a wedding. (Photo courtesy of Empowerment Liberation Cathedral)*

Bishop Allyson Abrams founded and established the Empowerment Liberation Cathedral in May 2014. She resigned from a Detroit church a decade ago after it was revealed she had married a woman, she told the Blade in 2014. After that, she decided to resign and moved to the area to start her own Baptist church — Empowerment Liberation Cathedral, now based in Lanham, Md.

"We welcome and affirm every race, gender, sexuality and disability," Abrams told the Blade in 2014. "We want to give them a safe space, teach principles and to pour into them God's love. People say it's amazing to hear a pastor say that God loves us the way we are. I'm always going to make sure God knows them."

**Most Committed Activist: Heidi Ellis**

Runner-up: Rayceen Pendarvis





**Heidi Ellis** attends the 2023 Human Right Campaign National Dinner. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)

Heidi Ellis is the founder and CEO of HME Consulting and Advocacy, a company that seeks to advance policies and initiatives that address issues of intersectionality within the LGBTQ+ community. She works on a variety of projects in the consulting and advocacy space, like facilitating training for companies to better understand how to serve and work with LGBTQ clients and employees, for example. She is a leader in the DC LGBTQ+ Budget Coalition, and since she began leading the coalition, it has raised more than \$5 million for local LGBTQ programs.

"Even though I am a private consultant ... my work is very much mission-driven," she told the Blade in September. "I don't take any clients that are not aligned with my mission."

**Best D.C. Public Official: Robert White**

Runner-up: Salah Czapary



*D.C. Councilmember **Robert White** marches in the 2023 Capital Pride Parade. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

At-large Councilmember Robert White has been a member of the D.C. Council since 2016 and ran for mayor in the 2022 election, where he garnered endorsements from LGBTQ organizations like the Capital Stonewall Democrats. As a Council member, he's introduced pro-LGBTQ legislation like the Pride Plates Amendment Act of 2023, which would create a special purpose fund to support the work of the Office of LGBTQ Affairs through a line of Pride license plates. He's also been outspoken in condemning violence against the LGBTQ community. "I want my LGBTQ neighbors to know that I see you, I hear you, I support you, and I am deeply troubled and disturbed by these attacks," he said in 2019.

**Best LGBTQ Social Group: Gay Men's Chorus of Washington**

1517 18th St., N.W.

[gmcw.org](http://gmcw.org)

Editor's Choice: Impulse DC





*The Gay Men's Chorus of Washington performs 'Dolly' at the Lincoln Theater last June. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

A repeat winner in this category, the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington calls itself the "voice of equality of the nation's capital," and with an annual audience of 100,000+, many would agree. The GMCW entertains, inspires, and advocates through music. They have toured nationwide and been featured on the "Today" show. Their next show in D.C. will be the Holiday Show on Dec. 9.

**Best Non-Profit powered by PEPCO: SMYAL**

410 7th St., S.E.

[smyal.org](http://smyal.org)

Editor's Choice: Capital Pride



*Two scholarship recipients attend the SMYAL For Summer event at Hook Hall. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Last year's Editor's Choice, SMYAL, takes the crown for 2023's Best Non-Profit. SMYAL is an organization dedicated to LGBTQ equality and opportunity. It provides counseling services, development opportunities, and after-school programs for LGBTQ youth.

It also provides education and training for adults servicing LGBTQ youths in schools, housing programs, local government agencies, and hospitals.

SMYAL's mission is to instill confidence and life skills into youth as well as to inspire them to partake in community service. These fundamental values will be critical for LGBTQ youth to carry into a brighter, empowered future.

**Best House of Worship: Foundry United Methodist Church**

1500 16th St., N.W.

[foundryumc.org](http://foundryumc.org)

Editor's Choice: Metropolitan Community Church of Washington DC





*Foundry United Methodist Church (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

For LGBTQ people of faith, finding a supportive community can be challenging. The Foundry United Methodist Church is an inclusive, Christian community that is welcoming to all. As stated on its website, some of its strongest values are a devotion to diversity and that they honor humans just as they honor divinity.

The church hangs the LGBTQ and transgender Pride flags outside, making it clear the community is welcome. The inclusion does not stop there, as the church has an LGBTQ board member, and occasionally hosts events such as the LGBTQ+ Potluck they held last year.

**Best Local Website/Social Media Account: Washingtonian Problems**

[@washingtonianprobs](https://www.washingtonianproblems.com/)

Editor's Choice: District Fray Magazine



Washingtonian Problems began as a Tumblr blog in 2012. It moved to Instagram in January 2019 “to have a better chance of building a solid community.”

“The brand’s mission is to foster a deep love for Washington, D.C., through informing residents about what’s happening across the city, providing laughter, and allowing followers to engage with the brand,” reads its website.

Recent posts on its IG page include DC Dates Live and the renaming of the long-maligned Dave Thomas Circle to Mamie ‘Peanut’ Johnson Plaza. Embattled New York Congressman George Santos, who is also known for his stint as a drag queen in Rio de Janeiro, also gets an honorable mention.

**Best Local TV/Radio Personality: Britt Waters, ABC7**

[@itsBrittWaters](#)

Runner-up: Chuck Bell, NBC4



**Britt Waters** (Photo by Stephen Gosling)

Britt Waters joined ABC7 in September 2021. She is a morning traffic reporter on “7News On Your Side” and host on “Good Morning Washington.” Waters is also a Washington Wizards in-game host.

She also hosts Sirius XM’s “Pandora New Thumb 20 Countdown Show.” When not working, Waters is known for her pro-wrestling commentary on TikTok, her vast collection of sneakers, and her love of pasta at Filomena in Georgetown.



## **Best Medical Provider: Whitman-Walker Health**

Editor's Choice: AIDS Healthcare Foundation



*(Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Whitman-Walker Health has been serving the D.C. community since 1973.

Named after Walt Whitman, who once lived in Washington, and Dr. Mary Edwards Walker, a physician who worked in D.C. during the Civil War before she became a women's rights activist, Whitman-Walker was one of the first organizations to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the city. Whitman-Walker's mission has expanded to include legal services and general medical and dental care for LGBTQ Washingtonians and the city's residents as a whole.

Whitman-Walker's new Max Robinson Center opened last month in the city's St. Elizabeth's East campus in Southeast Washington.

The Blade also acknowledges AIDS Healthcare Foundation for its continued work in D.C. and around the world.

## **Best Alternative Transportation: Metro**

Editor's Choice: Capital Bikeshare



(Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)

**Best Private School: Barrie School**

13500 Layhill Rd.

Silver Spring, Md.

Editor's Choice: Burgundy Farm Country Day School



*Barrie School (Screen capture via YouTube)*



## BUSINESS

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### **Best Local Businessperson: Roger Whyte, Stratus Firm**

[stratusfirm.com](http://stratusfirm.com)

Runner-up: Ed Bailey, Trade & Number Nine



*Roger Whyte (Photo by Rodney Bailey)*

Roger Whyte in 2011 founded RJ Whyte Event Production. The company in January rebranded itself as the Stratus Firm.

“The rebrand demonstrates the company’s depth of expertise as producers, technologists, designers, strategists, videographers, and everything in between,” reads the rebranding announcement. “As the landscape for event production has evolved the last few years, Stratus Firm recognizes its unique position to continue innovating in new ways by renewing its focus in the competitive industry and delivering enhanced services at the highest level.”

Whyte said he remains thankful to his colleagues and partners “who have lifted us to a position to be able to make this change for our clients.”

“It is because of their hard work, expertise, and skills that we have been able to create connections with our clients and produce events that exceed expectations,” he said.

### **Best LGBTQ-Owned Business: Jane Jane**

1705 14th St., N.W.

[janejanedc.com](http://janejanedc.com)

Editor’s Choice: District CoOp



*Jane Jane (Photo courtesy of the Capital Pride Alliance)*

Jane Jane is a local restaurant and bar with a wide variety of cocktails, beers, wines, as well as a non-alcoholic menu for under-21s. Unique house features include “Classified Documents,” “Gin Soaked Felon,” “Seasonal Affective Delight,” and more. Jane Jane is also a participant in D.C.’s annual Taste of Pride, among other local restaurants.

#### **Most LGBTQ-Friendly Workplace: Logan 14**

1314 14th St., N.W.

[logan14salonspa.com](http://logan14salonspa.com)

Editor’s Choice: Capital Center for Psychotherapy and Wellness





*Logan 14 (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

This year marks Logan 14's eighth consecutive win on the Blade's Best Of. With roughly 75% of the business's clientele being LGBTQ, this is their first win in this category.

Logan 14 offers everything you could want from a salon or spa, including cut, color, extensions, waxes, massages, and hair styling for special occasions.

**Best Fitness or Workout Spot: VIDA Fitness**

Multiple locations

[VidaFitness.com](http://VidaFitness.com)

Editor's Choice: Barry's Bootcamp



*Photo courtesy of VIDA Fitness*

VIDA Fitness is without a doubt one of the DMV's best-known and beloved gyms.

The franchise has locations on U Street and in Logan Circle, City Vista, Gallery Place, the Yards, and in Ballston. Another VIDA Fitness gym will soon open in Reston.

"Our gyms set the standard for high-quality, contemporary fitness with uniquely designed spaces, state-of-the-art equipment, industry-leading programming, luxurious amenities, and a social atmosphere that motivates you to achieve at your highest capacity," reads VIDA's website.

VIDA's Penthouse Pool and Lounge on U Street is one of the city's more exclusive summertime refuges.

**Best Dentist: Dr. Gregory Martin DDS**

5454 Wisconsin Ave., N.W.

[gregorymartindds.com](http://gregorymartindds.com)

Runner-up: Dr. Rob McKernan, Big Gay Smiles & Staff Dentist, Whitman Walker Health





*Gregory Martin, DDS (Photo courtesy of Martin)*

**Best Real Estate Agent: Justin Noble, TTR Sotheby's**

[BurnsandNoble.com](http://BurnsandNoble.com)

202-503-4243

Runner-up: Stacey Williams-Zeiger, Zeiger Realty





**Justin Noble** (Photo by Meg Shupe)



Justin Noble is a Realtor with Sotheby's International Realty licensed in D.C., Maryland, and Delaware for your DMV and Delaware beach needs. Specializing in first-time homebuyers, development, and new construction as well as estate sales, Justin is a well-versed agent, highly regarded, and provides white glove service at all price points.

**Best Real Estate Group: Bediz Group, Keller Williams**

1918 18th St., N.W.

[Bediz.com](http://Bediz.com)

Runner-up: Jenn Smira Team, Compass



**Best Adult Store: Bite the Fruit**  
1723 Connecticut Ave., N.W. (Second floor)  
Editor's Choice: Trick Box





Bite the Fruit is a frequent guest on this list — the shop has been voted Best Adult Store by readers several times and won in the Best Adult Store category in 2021 and 2022. The shop has a robust inventory of sex toys, films, and apparel. Bite the Fruit is self-described as kink-forward, gay-owned and straight-friendly. “We cater to everyone guided by what is safe, sane and consensual,” according to its website. Items are available in-store or online.

**Best Tattoo Parlor: Fatty’s Tattoos**

Multiple locations

[Fattystattoos.com](http://Fattystattoos.com)

Editor’s Choice: Dapper Dog Tattoo

**Best Salon/Spa: Bang Salon**

601 F St., N.W. #100

[bangsalon.com](http://bangsalon.com)

Editor’s Choice: Logan 14



*Photo courtesy of Bang Salon.*

With four locations in the D.C. area, Bang Salon offers everything you could need for your hair, such as cut, color, style, keratin treatment, loc maintenance, and so much more.

For whole body wellness, the salon has an aura spa, nutritional counseling, a penthouse pool, personal training, Pilates, Sweatbox, and Vida Fitness.

**Best Hotel: Eaton DC**

1201 K St., N.W.

[eatonworkshop.com/en-us/washington-dc/](https://eatonworkshop.com/en-us/washington-dc/)

Editor's Choice: Four Seasons





*Eaton DC (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Eaton DC, a returning winner in this category, is described as beyond a hotel for tourists. According to its website, “Eaton exists at the nexus of hospitality, impact, culture, and wellness.”

Dedicated to culture and creativity, Eaton frequently hosts original artistic programming such as live music, film, talks, theater, and more. The building itself was designed to be innovative and progressive, and environmentally sustainable.

Eaton has been welcoming to the LGBTQ community, hosting a month-long Pride festival in 2022.

**Best Car Dealership: BMW of Fairfax**

8427 Lee Highway

Fairfax, Va.

[Bmwoffairfax.com](http://Bmwoffairfax.com)

Editor’s Choice: DARCARS



*BMW of Fairfax (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

**Best Home Furnishings: Miss Pixie's**

1626 14th St., N.W.

[Misspixies.com](http://Misspixies.com)

Editor's Choice: Room & Board





*Miss Pixie's (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Miss Pixie's, returning as winner of Best Home Furnishings for the third year in a row, sells vintage furniture and decor perfect for any queer home. They have everything you could need, including chairs, tables, bookshelves, dressers, mirrors, and "whatnots," which includes dishware, photos, books, magazines, and even bottle caps. Miss Pixie's diverse catalogue has a wide range of colors, shapes, and sizes so everyone can find something perfect for them.

### **Best Pet Business or Veterinarian: District Dogs**

[Districtdogs.com](http://Districtdogs.com)

Editor's Choice: City Paws Animal Hospital



*District Dogs (Photo courtesy District Dogs)*

**Best Lawyer: Jennifer Fairfax**

Family Formation Law Office

827 Woodside Parkway

Silver Spring, Md.

Runner-up: Michele Zavos





*Jennifer Fairfax*

Jennifer Fairfax focuses on adoption and assisted reproductive law and is licensed in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, according to her bio. (Fairfax was appointed Montgomery County Circuit Court judge in September so is no longer practicing as an attorney.)

## **REHOBOTH BEACH**

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**Best Rehoboth Drag Queen: Magnolia Applebottom**

Runner-up: ReginaCox



*Magnolia Applebottom (Washington Blade photo by Daniel Truitt)*

Magnolia seems too young to be a veteran and staple of Rehoboth nightlife entertainment, yet that's exactly what she's become. From Diego's to the Blue Moon to the nearby Milton Theatre, Magnolia holds court in her inimitable way, always singing live and looking fabulous. She's won this category multiple times, which is no small feat given the quality and quantity of drag shows in the Rehoboth Beach area. Even nearby Dewey Beach, popular with the straight college crowd, has gotten in on the drag craze with shows this year popping up at North Shore and other venues. But no one in the burgeoning drag scene at the beach does it better than Magnolia, who reigns for another year as queen of this category.

#### **Best Rehoboth Drag Show: Drag Brunch at the Pines**

56 Baltimore Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.

Editor's Choice: Splash Party with Magnolia Applebottom at Diego's





*Drag Brunch at the Pines (Washington Blade photo by Daniel Truitt)*

Drag fans have an embarrassment of riches in Rehoboth Beach and for the second consecutive year, our readers have embraced Drag Brunch at the Pines as the best. No one works harder to boost Rehoboth's live entertainment scene than Kristina Kelly, who holds court at The Pines. She's not just a performer, but also the one responsible for booking a wide array of entertainment at The Pines, from drag to piano to book signings. Rehoboth would be a much duller place without Kelly's dedication and hard work; someone get her a key to the city!

**Best Rehoboth-Area Live Show: Dirty Bingo with Magnolia Applebottom at Diego's**

37298 Rehoboth Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.

[Diegosbarnightclub.com](http://Diegosbarnightclub.com)

Editor's Choice: Legends at Blue Moon



Washington Blade | Daniel Truitt

***Magnolia Applebottom leads Dirty Bingo at Diego's (Washington Blade photo by Daniel Truitt)***

Magnolia Applebottom's Dirty Bingo is just one of her gigs but it's our readers' pick for the best live show in town. And there's no shortage of competition here, from the venerable Pamala Stanley's occasional Sunday dance party at Freddie's to the talented singer and pianist Nate Buccieri at the Moon, there are plenty of options for live shows. Magnolia brings her fearless quick wit to her Dirty Bingo ensuring a hilarious good time for all.

**Best Rehoboth Bartender: Chris Chandler**

Purple Parrot

134 Rehoboth Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.

Runner-up: Georgiy Yanchenko, Purple Parrot





*Chris Chandler (Washington Blade photo by Daniel Truitt)*

Chris Chandler has won this category so many times that we thought about renaming the award in his honor. And it's easy to see why. From the busiest summer holiday weekends to the sleepy weeknights in February, Chandler is a constant presence and handles the crowds with ease. The Parrot is always finding fun ways to party, including a recent event in honor of Mrs. Roper that drew a packed house during a tropical storm with everyone decked out in Roper wigs and caftans. Through it all, Chandler presides with a calm smile always at the ready with a generous pour of your favorite cocktail.

**Best Rehoboth Outdoor Dining: Purple Parrot**

134 Rehoboth Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.

Runner-up: Aqua



*Purple Parrot (Washington Blade photo by Daniel Truitt)*

This is the second consecutive win for the venerable Parrot in this category. In summer, there's no better place to escape the boardwalk, grab a table, and enjoy the always-festive atmosphere of the outdoor Biergarten. There are regular food specials, including crab cakes, German cuisine, and prime rib nights. The Parrot is also home to perennial winners in our Best Bartender category, Chris Chandler (this year's winner) and Georgiy Yanchenko (last year's winner).

**Best Rehoboth Coffeeshop: The Coffee Mill**

127 Rehoboth Ave. B

Rehoboth Beach, Del.

Editor's Choice: Rise Up





Washington Blade | Daniel Truitt

*The Coffee Mill (Washington Blade photo by Daniel Truitt)*

This is the second consecutive win for the Coffee Mill, a locals favorite for its diverse selection of beans, cozy and welcoming atmosphere, and status as a place to be seen, especially on weekends when the outdoor tables fill up fast.

**Best Rehoboth Restaurant: Drift**

42 ½ Baltimore Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.

Editor's Choice: Blue Moon



*Drift (Washington Blade photo by Daniel Truitt)*

Drift took Rehoboth by storm this year with its inventive seafood-centric menu (the lobster French toast is a must) and scored a well-deserved rave review in the Washington Post.

The building dates to the late 1800s and formerly housed the Seafood Shack. But the rustic vibe is gone after a gorgeous renovation that includes a narrow dining room, partially open kitchen, spacious outdoor dining area, and intimate bar that cleverly opens to the outside with room for a handful of outdoor barstools when weather permits.

Chef Tom Wiswell, known to D.C. diners from his stint at Kinship, has created a menu that celebrates regional cuisine like oysters and crab cakes, but elevates them with unique preparations and stunning presentations.

Drift is part of the growing 2nd Block Hospitality Group, which just opened its newest hot spot, Bodhi Kitchen, which will likely turn up in our 2024 Best Of issue. In the meantime, make a reservation at Drift and enjoy the best of the beach.

**Best Rehoboth Real Estate Agent: Lee Ann Wilkinson**

16698 Kings Highway A

Lewes, Del.

[Leeanngroup.com](http://Leeanngroup.com)

Runner-up: Jason Abela





**Lee Ann Wilkinson** (*Washington Blade photo by Daniel Truitt*)

This is Lee Ann Wilkinson's sixth consecutive win in this competitive category. The Lee Ann Wilkinson Group is regularly tops in regional sales in Sussex County, which is home to Rehoboth Beach. In this competitive real estate market with high interest rates and low inventory, you need talented professionals like Lee Ann on your side when buying or selling a home.

**Best Rehoboth Business: Diego's Bar & Nightclub**

37298 Rehoboth Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.

[Diegosbarnightclub.com](http://Diegosbarnightclub.com)

Editor's Choice: Aqua Grill



*Diego's Bar & Nightclub (Washington Blade photo by Daniel Truitt)*

This is the third consecutive win for Diego's in this category and evidence of the enduring appeal and staying power of this favorite destination for tourists and locals alike. Whether you're looking for a laid back happy hour with friends or a sweaty, packed dance party, you'll find it at Diego's, which is also home to an array of live entertainment and drag shows. The spacious and comfortable outdoor bar is simply one of the town's greatest pleasures. Rehoboth could use more outdoor spaces like this.





Cambridge, Md., is home to quaint shops, restaurants, and Victorian homes on Maryland's Eastern Shore. (Photo courtesy James Lumalcuri)

CAMBRIDGE, Md. — Driving through this scenic, historic town on Maryland's Eastern Shore, you'll be charmed by streets lined with unique shops, restaurants, and beautifully restored Victorian homes. You'll also be struck by the number of LGBTQ Pride flags flying throughout the town.

The flags are a reassuring signal that everyone is welcome here, despite the town's location in ruby red Dorchester County, which voted for Donald Trump over Kamala Harris by a lopsided margin. But don't let that deter you from visiting. A new organization, Proudly Cambridge, is holding its debut Pride event this weekend, touting the town's welcoming, inclusive culture.

"We stumbled on a beautiful secret and we wanted to help get the word out," said James Lumalcuri of the effort to create Proudly Cambridge.

The organization celebrates diversity, enhances public spaces, and seeks to uplift all that Cambridge has to share, according to its mission statement, under the tagline "You Belong Here."

The group has so far held informal movie nights and a picnic and garden party; the launch party is June 28 at the Cambridge Yacht Club, which will feature a Pride celebration and tea dance. The event's 75 tickets sold out quickly and proceeds benefit DoCo Pride.

"Tickets went faster than we imagined and we're bummed we can't welcome everyone who wanted to come," Lumalcuri said, adding that organizers plan to make "Cheers on the Choptank" an annual event with added capacity next year.

One of the group's first projects was to distribute free Pride flags to anyone who requested one and the result is a visually striking display of a large number of flags flying all over town. Up next: Proudly Cambridge plans to roll out a program offering affirming businesses rainbow crab stickers to show their inclusiveness and LGBTQ support. The group also wants to engage with potential visitors and homebuyers.

“We want to spread the word outside of Cambridge — in D.C. and Baltimore — who don’t know about Cambridge,” Lumalcuri said. “We want them to come and know we are a safe haven. You can exist here and feel comfortable and supported by neighbors in a way that we didn’t anticipate when we moved here.”



**James Lumalcuri and Lou Cardenas** sailing in Cambridge, Md. The couple bought a second home there and are spreading the word about the town’s pro-LGBTQ culture. (Photo courtesy the couple)

Lumalcuri, 53, a federal government employee, and his husband, Lou Cardenas, 62, a Realtor, purchased a Victorian house in Cambridge in 2021 and embarked on an extensive renovation. The couple also owns a home in Adams Morgan in D.C.

“We saw the opportunity here and wanted to share it with others,” Cardenas said. “There’s lots of housing inventory in the \$300-400,000 range ... we’re not here to gentrify people out of town because a lot of these homes are just empty and need to be fixed up and we’re happy to be a part of that.”

Lumalcuri was talking with friends one Sunday last year at the gazebo (affectionately known as the “gayzebo” by locals) at the Yacht Club and the idea for Proudly Cambridge was born. The founding board members are Lumalcuri, Corey van Vlymen, Brian Orjuela, Lauren Mross, and Caleb Holland. The group is currently working toward forming a 501(c)3.

“We need visibility and support for those who need it,” Mross said. “We started making lists of what we wanted to do and the five of us ran with it. We started meeting weekly and solidified what we wanted to do.”

Mross, 50, a brand strategist and web designer, moved to Cambridge from Atlanta with her wife three years ago. They knew they wanted to be near the water and farther north and began researching their options when they discovered Cambridge.



"I had not heard of Cambridge but the location seemed perfect," she said. "I pointed on a map and said this is where we're going to move."

The couple packed up, bought a camper trailer and parked it in different campsites but kept coming back to Cambridge.

"I didn't know how right it was until we moved here," she said. "It's the most welcoming place ... there's an energy vortex here – how did so many cool, progressive people end up in one place?"

Corey van Vlymen and his husband live in D.C. and were looking for a second home. They considered Lost River, W.Va., but decided they preferred to be on the water.

"We looked at a map on both sides of the bay and came to Cambridge on a Saturday and bought a house that day," said van Vlymen, 39, a senior scientist at Booz Allen Hamilton. They've owned in Cambridge for two years.

They were drawn to Cambridge due to its location on the water, the affordable housing inventory, and its proximity to D.C.; it's about an hour and 20 minutes away.

Now, through the work of Proudly Cambridge, they hope to highlight the town's many attributes to residents and visitors alike.

"Something we all agree on is there's a perception problem for Cambridge and a lack of awareness," van Vlymen said. "If you tell someone you're going to Cambridge, chances are they think, 'England or Massachusetts?'"

He cited the affordability and the opportunity to save older, historic homes as a big draw for buyers.

"It's all about celebrating all the things that make Cambridge great," Mross added. "Our monthly social events are joyful and celebratory." A recent game night drew about 70 people.

She noted that the goal is not to gentrify the town and push longtime residents out, but to uplift all the people who are already there while welcoming new visitors and future residents.

They also noted that Proudly Cambridge does not seek to supplant existing Pride-focused organizations. Dorchester County Pride organizes countywide Pride events and Delmarva Pride was held in nearby Easton two weeks ago.

"We celebrate all diversity but are gay powered and gay led," Mross noted.

To learn more about Proudly Cambridge, visit the group on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

## What to see and do

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Cambridge, located 13 miles up the Choptank River from the Chesapeake Bay, has a population of roughly 15,000. It was settled in 1684 and named for the English university town in 1686. It is home to the Harriet Tubman Museum, mural, and monument. Its proximity to the **Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge** makes it a popular stop for birders, drawn to more than 27,000 acres of marshland dubbed "the Everglades of the north."

The refuge is walkable, bikeable, and driveable, making it an accessible attraction for all. There are kayaking and biking tours through **Blackwater Adventures** ([blackwateradventuresmd.com](http://blackwateradventuresmd.com)).

Back in town, take a stroll along the water and through historic downtown and admire the architecture. Take in the striking **Harriet Tubman mural** (424 Race St.). Shop in the many local boutiques, and don't miss the gay-owned **Shorelife Home and Gifts** (421 Race St.), filled with stylish coastal décor items.

Stop for breakfast or lunch at **Black Water Bakery** (429 Race St.), which offers a full compliment of coffee drinks along with a build-your-own mimosa bar and a full menu of creative cocktails.

The **Cambridge Yacht Club** (1 Mill St.) is always bustling but you need to be a member to get in. **Snapper's** on the water is temporarily closed for renovations. **RaR Brewing** (rarbrewing.com) is popular for craft beers served in an 80-year-old former pool hall and bowling alley. The menu offers burgers, wings, and other bar fare.

For dinner or wine, don't miss the fantastic **Vintage 414** (414 Race St.), which offers lunch, dinner, wine tasting events, specialty foods, and a large selection of wines. The homemade cheddar crackers, inventive flatbreads, and creative desserts (citrus olive oil cake, carrot cake trifle) were a hit on a recent visit.

Also nearby is **Ava's** (305 High St.), a regional chain offering outstanding Italian dishes, pizzas, and more.

For something off the beaten path, visit **Emily's Produce** (22143 Church Creek Rd.) for its nursery, produce, and prepared meals.

"Ten minutes into the sticks there's a place called Emily's Produce, where you can pay \$5 and walk through a field and pick sunflowers, blueberries, you can feed the goats ... and they have great food," van Vlymen said.

As for accommodations, there's the **Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay** (100 Heron Blvd. at Route 50), a resort complex with golf course, spa, and marina. Otherwise, check out Airbnb and VRBO for short-term rentals closer to downtown.

Its proximity to D.C. and Baltimore makes Cambridge an ideal weekend getaway. The large LGBTQ population is welcoming and they are happy to talk up their town and show you around.

"There's a closeness among the neighbors that I wasn't feeling in D.C.," Lumalcuri said. "We look after each other."

[Continue Reading](#)



(Book cover image courtesy of FSG)



## **'Baldwin: A Love Story'**

By Nicholas Boggs

c.2025, FSG\$35/704 pages

"Baldwin: A Love Story" is a sympathetic biography, the first major one in 30 years, of acclaimed Black gay writer James Baldwin. Drawing on Baldwin's fiction, essays, and letters, Nicolas Boggs, a white writer who rediscovered and co-edited a new edition of a long-lost Baldwin book, explores Baldwin's life and work through focusing on his lovers, mentors, and inspirations.

The book begins with a quick look at Baldwin's childhood in Harlem, and his difficult relationship with his religious, angry stepfather. Baldwin's experience with Orilla Miller, a white teacher who encouraged the boy's writing and took him to plays and movies, even against his father's wishes, helped shape his life and tempered his feelings toward white people. When Baldwin later joined a church and became a child preacher, though, he felt conflicted between academic success and religious demands, even denouncing Miller at one point. In a fascinating late essay, Baldwin also described his teenage sexual relationship with a mobster, who showed him off in public.

Baldwin's romantic life was complicated, as he preferred men who were not outwardly gay. Indeed, many would marry women and have children while also involved with Baldwin. Still, they would often remain friends and enabled Baldwin's work. Lucien Happersberger, who met Baldwin while both were living in Paris, sent him to a Swiss village, where he wrote his first novel, "Go Tell It on the Mountain," as well as an essay, "Stranger in the Village," about the oddness of being the first Black person many villagers had ever seen. Baldwin met Turkish actor Engin Cezzar in New York at the Actors' Studio; Baldwin later spent time in Istanbul with Cezzar and his wife, finishing "Another Country" and directing a controversial play about Turkish prisoners that depicted sexuality and gender.

Baldwin collaborated with French artist Yoran Cazac on a children's book, which later vanished. Boggs writes of his excitement about coming across this book while a student at Yale and how he later interviewed Cazac and his wife while also republishing the book. Baldwin also had many tumultuous sexual relationships with young men whom he tried to mentor and shape, most of which led to drama and despair.

The book carefully examines Baldwin's development as a writer. "Go Tell It on the Mountain" draws heavily on his early life, giving subtle signs of the main character John's sexuality, while "Giovanni's Room" bravely and openly shows a homosexual relationship, highly controversial at the time. "If Beale Street Could Talk" features a woman as its main character and narrator, the first time Baldwin wrote fully through a woman's perspective. His essays feel deeply personal, even if they do not reveal everything; Lucian is the unnamed visiting friend in one who the police briefly detained along with Baldwin. He found New York too distracting to write, spending his time there with friends and family or on business. He was close friends with modernist painter Beauford Delaney, also gay, who helped Baldwin see that a Black man could thrive as an artist. Delaney would later move to France, staying near Baldwin's home.

An epilogue has Boggs writing about encountering Baldwin's work as one of the few white students in a majority-Black school. It helpfully reminds us that Baldwin connects to all who feel different, no matter their race, sexuality, gender, or class. A well-written, easy-flowing biography, with many excerpts from Baldwin's writing, it shows how much of his life is revealed in his work. Let's hope it encourages reading the work, either again or for the first time.

[Continue Reading](#)



Gay Pride Day 1976 (Washington Blade archive photo)

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of LGBTQ Pride in Washington, D.C., the Washington Blade team combed our archives and put together a glossy magazine showcasing five decades of celebrations in the city. Below is a sampling of images from the magazine but be sure to find a print copy starting this week.



*D.C.'s Different Drummers march in the 2006 Capital Pride Parade. (Washington Blade archive photo by Adam Cuthbert)*



The magazine is being distributed now and is complimentary. You can find copies at LGBTQ bars and restaurants across the city. Or visit the Blade booth at the Pride festival on June 7 and 8 where we will distribute copies.

Thank you to our advertisers and sponsors, whose support has enabled us to distribute the magazine free of charge. And thanks to our dedicated team at the Blade, especially Photo Editor Michael Key, who spent many hours searching the archives for the best images, many of which are unique to the Blade and cannot be found elsewhere. And thanks to our dynamic production team of Meaghan Juba, who designed the magazine, and Phil Rockstroh who managed the process. Stephen Rutgers and Brian Pitts handled sales and marketing and staff writers Lou Chibbaro Jr., Christopher Kane, Michael K. Lavers, Joe Reberkenny along with freelancer and former Blade staffer Joey DiGuglielmo wrote the essays.

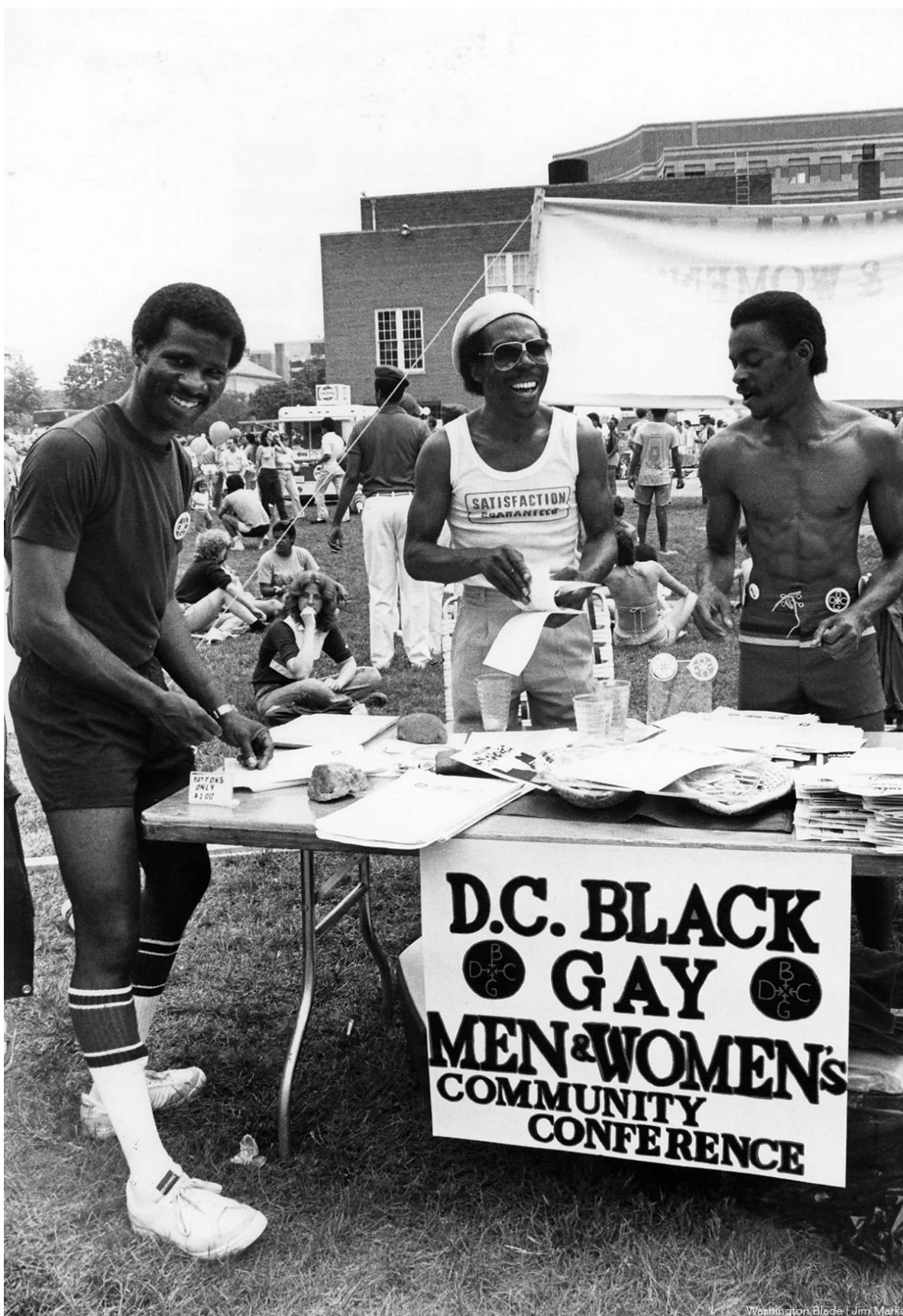


*The 1995 Lesbian and Gay Freedom Festival was held on Freedom Plaza on June 18.  
(Washington Blade archive photo by Clint Steib)*

The magazine represents more than 50 years of hard work by countless reporters, editors, advertising sales reps, photographers, and other media professionals who have brought you the Washington Blade since 1969.

We hope you enjoy the magazine and keep it as a reminder of all the many ups and downs our local LGBTQ community has experienced over the past 50 years.

I hope you will consider supporting our vital mission by becoming a Blade member today. At a time when reliable, accurate LGBTQ news is more essential than ever, your contribution helps make it possible. With a monthly gift starting at just \$7, you'll ensure that the Blade remains a trusted, free resource for the community — now and for years to come. [Click here](#) to help fund LGBTQ journalism.



*The D.C. Black Gay Men & Women's Community Conference table at Gay Pride Day in 1978. (Washington Blade archive photo by Jim Marks)*





Washington Blade | Doug Hinckle

*A scene from 1985 Gay and Lesbian Pride Day. (Washington Blade archive photo by Doug Hinckle)*



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*A scene from the 1988 Gay and Lesbian Pride Day. (Washington Blade archive photo by Doug Hinckle)*





*A scene from the Capital Pride Block Party in 2018. (Washington Blade photo by Daniel Truitt)*



*Keke Palmer performs at the 2024 Capital Pride Festival. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

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