

## Best of LGBTQ D.C. 2024

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[washingtonblade.com/2024/10/17/best-of-lgbtq-dc-2024](https://www.washingtonblade.com/2024/10/17/best-of-lgbtq-dc-2024)

Staff reports

October 17, 2024



Once again the Blade is proud to celebrate the best in our local community, from activists to pizza.

With nearly 5,000 nominations and 35,000 votes, this was the biggest year yet for our annual friendly competition, our 23<sup>rd</sup> year organizing this contest. Stephen Rutgers coordinated the voting; Michael Key coordinated the photos. This year's contributing writers are: Lou Chibbaro Jr., Chris Kane, Kevin Naff, Joe Reberkenny, Tinashe Chingarande, Clinton Engelberger, Erkki Forster, Joey DiGuglielmo, Evan Caplan, and Patrick Folliard.

This year's Local Hero Award, which is the only award voted on by Blade staff, goes to the tireless June Crenshaw, a ubiquitous presence in our local community who does life-saving work.

**Local Hero: June Crenshaw**

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Those who know June Crenshaw describe her as a fierce advocate for the safety and empowerment of LGBTQ youth who are experiencing homelessness.

Since 2016, Crenshaw has served as executive director of the Wanda Alston Foundation, a D.C.-based nonprofit organization providing support and services for homeless LGBTQ youth in the D.C. metro area.

The Alston Foundation says in a statement that under Crenshaw's leadership, the organization provides two to six years of shelter, case management, connection to medical and mental health care, development of life skills, and employment and school support for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness between the ages of 18 and 24.

"Since joining the Wanda Alston Foundation, June has significantly increased awareness of the prevalence of homelessness among LGBTQ youth and the trauma they experience," the statement says. "She tirelessly fights for resources to be allocated to programs that create a safe and welcoming environment for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness," it says.

"She educates, trains, and motivates her staff and volunteers to ensure a consistent vision and optimal organizational performance," the statement continues. "She has tripled the organization's budget and, after 13 years of operations, opened the second location and a Counseling Center that focuses on supporting queer folks impacted by Intimate Partner Violence," it says.

Crenshaw took on additional responsibilities in 2022 when a D.C. Superior Court judge appointed the Alston Foundation to serve as the city's receiver for the LGBTQ community services center Casa Ruby, placing the Alston Foundation in full control of the operations and finances of the then faltering Casa Ruby, which has since ceased operating.

Meanwhile, in addition to her role as executive director of the Alston Foundation, Crenshaw also serves as co-chair of the organizing committee for World Pride 2025, the international LGBTQ Pride celebration that D.C. will host, and which will take place May 23 to June 7, 2025.

"Those two things keep me very busy," Crenshaw told the Blade. "But I continue to be engaged with the community advocating around resources for queer organizations to be able to serve and support our community members. So, real strong advocacy around the D.C. budget and making sure resources come to organizations like the Wanda Alston Foundation, but other organizations as well."

A native of Oklahoma, Crenshaw earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Tulsa in 1984, the year she moved to D.C. where she became involved in a wide range of endeavors in both nonprofit organizations and the business world.

She worked from 1989 to 1994 as a supervisor for research for the D.C.-based firm Washington Service Bureau, Inc., before working from 1994 to 2012 as a supervisor and later as project manager for Coventry Healthcare, Inc., a Bethesda-based national health insurance company that became part of the Aetna health insurance corporation.

Among her many involvements with nonprofit organizations, Crenshaw has served since 2007 as chair of the board of directors of the Rainbow Response Coalition, a D.C.-based coalition of local LGBTQ groups that provides training and education to address the issue of intimate partner violence in the LGBTQ community.

She served as chair of the board and board member of Whitman-Walker Health, the D.C. LGBTQ supportive healthcare provider from 2006 to 2016, and as a board member of the Whitman-Walker Foundation from 2017 to 2022.

From 2013 to 2020 she served on the board of directors of the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest LGBTQ advocacy organization. And from 2007 to 2015, she served on the Advisory Board for the D.C. Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs.

"Although I'm no longer on board of the Human Rights Campaign, I've stayed very involved in a lot of the work that's done there," she said regarding her current endeavors. "I'm hoping to participate in the get-out-the-vote initiative and to make sure that Kamala Harris becomes our next president and threats against our community are minimized," Crenshaw said.



(Lou Chibbaro Jr.)

## FOOD & DRINK

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### Best Coffee Shop: Tatte Bakery & Café

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

Multiple locations



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After snagging the Editor's Choice award two years running, Tatte now claims the Best Coffee Shop spot. Boston-based Tatte blanketed D.C. with its Mediterranean-inspired breakfasts, pastries, and coffees beginning in 2020. There are now more than a dozen around the DMV, serving seasonal brunches, craft drinks, and a welcome spot for people watching and catching up on emails.

*Editor's Choice: Three Fifty Bakery and Coffee Bar*

### Best Outdoor Dining: Le Diplomate

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

1601 14th St., N.W.



(Photo courtesy of Le Diplomate)



Snagging several Best Brunch awards and winning the Editor's Choice for Best Outdoor Dining last year, "Le Dip" has myriad fans for all meals. Its American take on a Parisian Bistro has proven popular over the past decade, now a cornerstone of the 14<sup>th</sup> Street corridor. Beloved for its bread basket, meaty cheeseburger, mussels, and more, its outdoor sheds took over an entire half-block of 14<sup>th</sup> Street, now a permanent fixture from which to view passersby while sipping aperitifs.

**Editor's Choice:** *Hank's Oyster Bar*

## **Best Restaurant: Tabard Inn**

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

1739 N St., N.W.



One of the oldest hotels in Washington, D.C., the Tabard Inn opened in 1922 in the style of an English manor and has been oozing charm ever since. While not gay-owned, it's become a welcoming gathering space for LGBTQ locals and visitors, owing to its geography in Dupont Circle, eccentric nature, somewhat hidden locale, and diverse staff and clientele. The restaurant, started as a tea room, is full of art and warmth, and places a focus on Mid-Atlantic cuisine.

**Editor's Choice:** *Pineapple & Pearls*

## **Best Brunch: Perry's Drag Brunch**

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

1811 Columbia Rd., N.W.



Celebrated for its long-running brunch (and winning the title in 2021), Perry's Drag Brunch is raucous and fabulous. Hosted only on Sundays (two seatings), this event treats guests to eclectic food like eggs, yakisoba, tater tots, and tiramisu. Perry's recently picked up a new chef, Masako Morishita, who won the 2024 James Beard Award for Best Emerging Chef. The restaurant also just debuted a Japanese breakfast.

***Editor's Choice:*** City Tap Dupont Drag Brunch

## **Best Local Brewery: Red Bear Brewing Company**

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[redbear.beer](http://redbear.beer)

209 M St., N.E.





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Having taken home Best Brunch, Best Neighborhood Bar and Best Local Brewery awards in the past, this year, it's back to win the Local Brewery award. 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.

***Editor's Choice: DC Brau***

### **Best Local Distillery: Republic Restoratives Distillery**

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[republicrestoratives.com](https://republicrestoratives.com)

1369 New York Ave., N.E.





(Photo courtesy of Republic Restoratives)

Winning this title in 2021 and 2019, Republic Restoratives is women-owned, community-led, and made in the District. Republic's vodka, Civic Pride, was created out of frustration with popular brands co-opting the rainbow flag while also supporting organizations or efforts that directly harm LGBTQ people. It recently created and then quickly sold out bottles of "Madam" a bourbon-rye whiskey on whose label VPOTUS Kamala Harris's smiling visage is featured.

**Editor's Choice:** *Cotton & Reed*

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

[dukesgrocery.com](https://dukesgrocery.com)

Multiple locations



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The 2021 and 2023 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 was closed for a year, undergoing a renovation, and recently reopened to royal fanfare.

**Editor's Choice:** *Lucky Buns*

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

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[jenis.com](https://jenis.com)

Multiple locations



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August or December, Jeni's is known to cause pedestrian traffic backups on the busy 14<sup>th</sup> Street thoroughfare because of lines out the door. Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams has a "uniquely smooth texture and buttercream body" in fanciful flavors like birthday cake and fruit crumble. It scooped up the award last year and the year before, as well. There are locations in Arlington, Alexandria, Bethesda, Navy Yard, Yards Park, and McLean.

**Editor's Choice:** *Van Leeuwen Ice Cream*

### **Best Pizza: Andy's Pizza**

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

Multiple locations





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Slicing and saucing in the New York tradition, Andy's Pizza serves up pizza from stone ovens crafted from long-fermented dough, Wisconsin mozzarella, and California tomatoes. Andy's boasts seven spots across the area, including one in Shaw near popular gay bars. Options include flavors like pepperoni and white sauce, but the whole pies come in a range of options, including a Buffalo crispy chicken and a vegan pie with plant-based cheese.

***Editor's Choice: We the Pizza***

## **Best LGBTQ-Owned Business: KNEAD Hospitality**

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

Multiple locations



*KNEAD founders (Photo by Connor Studios)*

Gay couple and business partners Michael Reginbogin and Jason Berry co-founded KNEAD Hospitality & Design in 2014. The restaurant group has birthed eateries like Mi Vida, Gatsby, Succotash, and several others. “We want people to eat with their eyes,” said Berry in a 2021 [interview with the Blade](#).

***Editor’s Choice: A Tour of Her Own***

### **Best Local Winery: Chester Gap Cellars**

[chestergapcellars.com](https://chestergapcellars.com)

4615 Remount Rd, Front Royal, VA 22630





Located in Virginia, a small estate winery located outside Front Royal, Chester Gap is gay-owned and welcomes LGBTQ visitors for valley vistas and vintages. The owners — Jeff Seese and Travis Patton — also have an Airbnb so you can stay the evening, enjoy the fully stocked kitchen and outdoor fire pit, and wine at all hours.

***Editor's Choice: District Winery***

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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### Best Drag Queen: Destiny B. Childs

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Destiny B. Childs came onto the local drag scene in 2003 performing at a variety show. In 2003, as manager of Freddie's Beach Bar, she was drafted into drag duty as hostess and show director for Freddie's Follies and soon after started performing at Ziegfeld's.

She holds many pageant titles including Miss Zodiac 2005, Miss Freddie's 2006-2007, Miss International Gay Rodeo 2007, Miss Gaye USA 2008, Miss Gaye America D.C. 2008, Miss Gaye Universe 2011 and Miss Ziegfelds 2016.

She's also been a longtime mainstay as hostess of the Capital Pride concert and has been in the Imperial Court since 2011, holding the title "first empress."

Childs (Ric Benavides outside drag) says she "works hard to ensure all members of the Imperial Court feel welcomed, safe, and loved."

**Runner-up:** Bombalicious Eklaver



## Best Drag King: King Molasses

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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. Follow him on [Instagram](#) for more.

***Runner-up: King Flirty Xperience***



## Best Transgender Performer: Indiana Bones

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Indiana Bones describes her drag persona as “very femme, very pop star-esque” and “an extension of my femininity.”



Known outside drag as Adriana Emilia, she says, "I love looking and feeling beautiful while lip syncing to the main pop girls."

Bones, a trans woman, performs all over the D.C. area including Wednesdays at Kiki, weekends at either Nellie's drag brunch or City Tap House Dupont. She'll also be at a new venue HER Diner. She has been in the hospitality industry for about a decade but is "taking a break" from it now and performing full time.

"Thank you D.C. for loving me," she says.

Follow her on [@theonlyindiana](https://www.instagram.com/theonlyindiana) on Instagram for show times and dates.

**Runner-up:** Brooke N Hymen

## **Best Drag Show: Freddie's Follies**

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

Freddie's Beach Bar

555 S. 23rd St.

Arlington, Va.



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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.

Freddie's hosts various drag shows each month. The main event is Freddie's Follies every Saturday night at 8 p.m. The current cast is Destiny B. Childs, Sasha Adams Sanchez, and Monet Dupree.

**Editor's Choice:** SHOOK at Shaker's

## **Best Local Artist presented by Wild Side Media: Keyonna Jones**

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Washington native Keyonna Jones is passionate about art, community advocacy, and entrepreneurship. With a background in journalism and a master's degree in science management, she brings a distinct lens to her work.

As the founder of Congress Heights Arts and Culture Center, Jones has been instrumental in bringing new and necessary artistic experiences to the East of the River community in D.C. She also serves as board chair of The Creative School, showcasing her commitment to youth, education and creativity.

Jones, a lesbian, is also a skilled tattoo artist, published fashion stylist, talented photographer, graphic designer, and gardener.

***Runner-up:*** Haus of Bambi

## **Best Live Music in D.C. presented by Wild Side Media: The Anthem**

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901 Wharf St., S.W.





*(Photo by Jordan A. Grobe)*

Since opening its doors in October of 2017, The Anthem has earned its place among the DMV's best music venues.

Located on the Wharf, the cavernous 57,000-square-foot venue, which cost \$60 million to build and has a movable stage and backdrop that allows capacity to vary from 2,500 to 6,000, is not intimate. Far from it. It's big with shows ranging from seated to general admission. Entrance lines can move swiftly or slowly. But once in, the space offers good acoustics and decent sightlines, and there are lots of clean bathrooms and multiple bars for drinks and food.

The Anthem adds a vibrancy to the Waterfront. It's Metro accessible and has lots of nearby, but pricey, parking. Upcoming acts include Latto, Zayn, and the B-52s who are slated to perform on Halloween night.

***Editor's Choice: 9:30 Club***

### **Best Theater presented by Wild Side Media: Kennedy Center**

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

2700 F St., N.W.



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For many DMV residents, the historic Kennedy Center serves as a portal to the performing arts. The Center presents diverse artists, including numerous LGBTQ voices, across all of its programming, whether it be theater, opera, dance, the symphony, comedy, hip hop, or jazz.

And the Social Impact division recently had SMYAL as one of its Culture Caucus members. And lately the Center has even been hosting drag brunches at its Roof Terrace Restaurant. The Kennedy Center made its public debut on Sept. 8, 1971, with a gala opening performance featuring the world premiere of a Requiem mass honoring President Kennedy, a work commissioned from the legendary composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein. Its vast interior spaces include the Eisenhower Theatre, Opera House, Concert Hall, and assorted smaller venues.

Its Broadway Center Stage series brings some incredible Broadway talent, including fabulous queer stars, which currently includes Beanie Feldstein, Noah Galvin, Kevin McHale, and Nina White in “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee.”

***Editor’s Choice: Arena Stage***

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

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

1551 Trap Rd.

Vienna, Va.





*(Photo courtesy of Wolf Trap)*

Set on 117 acres of rolling hills and forest in Vienna, Va., Wolf Trap ranks high for outdoor entertainment.

Arvind Manocha, the out president and CEO of Northern Virginia's Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts for more than a decade, understands his platform and what comes with it. For him that means promoting diversity and queer inclusion.

Over the past two years, Wolf Trap has presented "Out & About," an annual two-day outdoor music festival spotlighting LGBTQ artists and vocal allies. With the new musical event, Manocha and his programming team are coalescing entertainment and visibility.

Featuring big queer names like Brandi Carlisle, Rufus Wainwright, and Be Steadwell, etc. Comfortably out for some time, Manocha regularly attends Wolf Trap performances and donor events with his husband Gideon Malone. And for some pre-Valentine's Day fun, Titus Burgess, the queer comedian, singer, and actor who is best known for his role as Titus Andromedon on the Netflix series "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt," is booked for Feb. 12.

***Editor's Choice:*** Merriweather Post Pavilion

## **Best Theater Production: 'Macbeth,' Shakespeare Theatre Company**

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

610 F St., N.W.





*(Photo by Marc Brenner)*

If there was a hot ticket in D.C. last season, Shakespeare Theatre Company's (STC) "Macbeth" was it.

Among the Bard's shortest and most popular tragedies, "Macbeth" typically comes with a built-in audience. But in directing the classic, STC's artistic director Simon Godwin didn't take any chances. He packed the production with talented star power including stage and screen star Ralph Fiennes ("The English Patient") as the eponymous Scottish general and Olivier Award-winner Indira Varma ("Game of Thrones") who played the monumentally ruthless Lady Macbeth.

Prior to coming to Washington in April of 2024, the greatly anticipated production enjoyed successful runs in Liverpool, Edinburgh, and London. Here, STC took its contemporary and satisfying take on "Macbeth" to a former BET soundstage in Brentwood, transforming the massive empty space into a war-scorched set perfect for scenes both large and intimate.

**Editor's Choice:** *"Fat Ham," Studio Theatre*

### **Best LGBTQ Bar: Crush Dance Bar**

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

2007 14th St., N.W.



Although Crush is one of the newest LGBTQ bars in the district, the weekly line around the block shows weekend after weekend that the 14th Street dance bar is the place to let loose, enjoy a cocktail, and live out your dancing queen fantasy. Its walls covered with nostalgic posters of pop divas and vinyl records of the latest playlist mainstays show that Crush is a sanctuary of dance.

The two floors boast three bars, a large rooftop patio, and a room that tributes dancing's greatest invention since surround sound: disco balls. Its list of signature cocktails includes the Kamala Kolada, Miora Rosé, and ever-popular orange and grapefruit crushes.

Its owners Stephen Rutgers and Mark Rutstein, who formerly operated the Cobalt Dance Bar, have come together to "create a new entertainment space that bridges the gap of labels" in the nation's capital.

***Editor's Choice: Little Gay Pub***

**Best Bartender: Ben Oursler, Annie's**

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

1609 17th St., N.W.



It makes sense that a restaurant like Annie's Paramount Steakhouse with such an vaunted history in Washington's LGBTQ scene would have the most voted for bartender, and this year's honor goes to Ben Oursler.

Oursler has helped Annie's stay the special LGBTQ institution D.C. queers have loved for decades by slinging drinks and smiles to everyone who comes in. His infectious attitude and spirit help make Annie's a place of year-round celebration.

**Runner-up:** Jared Keith Lee, Crush



## Best Local DJ: DJ Matt Bailer

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If you have visited any gay bars over the past few years, there's zero chance you haven't seen, heard, and danced to the musical stylings of DJ Matt Bailer on the dance floor. Bailer effortlessly mixes the trendiest artists, like Chappell Roan, with classic hits like "YMCA" to create a sound that is uniquely Bailer.

It is hard to stand on the sidelines of the dance floor as his funky beats interlock with tried-and-true staples that get not only the dance floor jumping but the whole bar. His non-stop schedule is a testament to not only his dedication to the craft, but also to the D.C. LGBTQ community's desire to dance to his mixes. You can find DJ Matt Bailer at a range of spaces including the 2024 voted best LGBTQ bar Crush, Kiki, Pitchers, and the wildly popular '90s dance party Peach Pit at DC9.

*Runner-up: DJ Heat*

## Best Neighborhood Bar: Number Nine

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

1435 P St., N.W.



With two floors of comfy seating, handsome bartenders who remember your order, and polished vibe, it makes sense that Number Nine was voted best neighborhood bar. The bar being a hot spot for Stonewall sports events, their collection of non-stop iconic music videos, and daily two-for-one drink deals keep the crowds coming. Don't forget to grab a mint Lifesaver (and copy of the Blade) from the giant bowl out front before you sit down, sip, and relax with your friends for the night.

***Editor's Choice:*** *Larry's Lounge*

### **Best Happy Hour presented by ABSOLUT: Crush Dance Bar**

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

2007 14th St., N.W.





Newcomer Crush made the Blade's Best Of list twice this year. The bar's fun nostalgic dance theme gets people in the door, but the happy hour is what keeps them there. Each weekday from 5-8 p.m. Crush offers \$7 premium drinks, \$9 craft cocktails (including their namesake Orange Crush), and half-priced draft beers.

***Editor's Choice: JR.'s Bar & Grill***

### **Best Outdoor Drinking: Little Gay Pub**

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

1100 P St., N.W.



D.C. may not be known for our year-round perfect weather, but the queer community in the city has always fancied outdoor spaces that offer comfortably cute places to sip and share with friends. Logan Circle's Little Gay Pub was voted this year's best outdoor drinking spot as it has an enclosed awning, picnic tables with rainbow parasols, and iconic red telephone box mural that makes the bar impossible to miss.

*Editor's Choice: Kiki*

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

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

1600 7th St., N.W. and 79 Potomac Ave., S.E.





Although not owned by a member of the LGBTQ community nor officially a gay bar, you will consistently see groups of D.C.'s LGBTQ community hanging out at Dacha Beer Garden drinking boots of beer and enjoying a selection off the beer garden's extensive menu. With its giant murals of gay icons Elizabeth Taylor at the Shaw location and Jackie Onassis in the Navy Yard spot, it's easy to see why gay, straight, and everyone in between can find something they like at Dacha.

***Editor's Choice:*** Stoney's

### **Best LGBTQ Bar Outside the District: Freddie's Beach Bar**

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

555 23rd St. S

Arlington, Va.



It is difficult to talk about the LGBTQ bar scene in the DMV without mentioning Freddie's Beach Bar in Arlington. Freddie's has been a staple LGBTQ bar in the area since it opened more than 20 years ago. Serving classic cocktails and a full menu, its famous Sunday Buffet Brunch, and daily events including drag shows, bingo, and karaoke, it makes sense that Washington Blade readers voted Freddie's the best "LGBTQ+ but straight friendly restaurant and bar" outside of the District.

***Editor's Choice:*** *Baltimore Eagle*

## **Best Museum: National Gallery of Art**

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[nga.gov](https://www.nga.gov)

6th St. and Constitution Ave., N.W.





*(Photo by jiawangkun/Bigstock)*

The National Gallery of Art earned the title of Best Museum this year, taking the title from the National Air & Space Museum. Home to more than 150,000 paintings, sculptures, decorative arts, photographs, prints, and drawings, the gallery showcases masterpieces by artists such as Vincent van Gogh, Claude Monet, Rembrandt, as well as the only Leonardo da Vinci painting outside of Europe, alongside contemporary art. Moreover, the gallery features an impressive collection of works by queer artists, including Ellsworth Kelly, Zanele Muholi, and Andy Warhol, which you can explore with a 45-minute self-guided tour. The gallery's stunning architecture — with one building in neoclassical and the other in modern style — is worth the visit alone. Admission is free, and unlike the Air & Space Museum, advance ticket reservations are not required.

***Editor's Choice: National Museum of African American History & Culture***

## COMMUNITY

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### Best Local TV/Radio Personality: Kidd O'Shea

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At 16 years old, Good Morning Washington (GMW) co-host Kidd O'Shea would make fake radio shows in his bedroom he would later play for his friend on a cassette tape during their drive to school.

Now, he's the winner of the Washington Blade's Best of LGBTQ DC Local Radio/TV Personality award.

"I am so lucky to be able to do what I get to do, and to be able to do it in this city," O'Shea said.

O'Shea has been a co-host and travel correspondent for GMW on ABC7 for nearly 10 years. His bright energy and passion for visiting new places have made him a television and radio staple for the D.C. community.

Britt Waters, a GMW co-host and the recipient of this award last year, has known O'Shea for 10 years and has worked with him for three.

She said the recognition was long overdue given how much the community adores O'Shea.

"I may have won last year, but I think my mom voted for Kidd last year," Waters said. "That just shows you how lovable he is."

Before O'Shea came to D.C., he worked in radio in his hometown of Milwaukee.

He initially dreamed of being on broadcast news as a teenager, and would record segments with his friends who owned camcorders. After meeting a neighbor who was a local TV news anchor, O'Shea was advised to get his start in radio — and that's exactly what he did.

"I literally picked up a phone book and looked up small radio stations, and there was one about 45 minutes from my parents' house," he said. "It was a polka country music station that played gospel music Sunday morning at 7 a.m."



He worked a 1-7 a.m. shift at that station for three months, but ultimately decided he was “ready for the big city.” O’Shea called a Milwaukee radio station and got his start pushing buttons and answering phones but eventually worked his way up.

O’Shea said he’s grateful to be pursuing a career where sharing your personal life is encouraged. He joked that he talks about his partner of five years “every other sentence” to his GMW co-hosts, but said he’s excited to work in a space where he can be open.

“Coming up through radio, that’s really how you make that connection is being honest and open,” he said. “If I met you at a bar on a Friday night, I would tell you the same story that I tell you the next morning on the radio or TV.”

O’Shea has been a visible presence for the LGBTQ community since he first opened up about his identity on air on a Milwaukee radio show he co-hosted called the Kidd and Elizabeth Show.

After former President Barack Obama endorsed gay marriage in 2012, O’Shea casually offered his thoughts on the endorsement “as a gay man” with his co-host Elizabeth Kay.

“Listeners were like, ‘I think Kidd just said he’s gay,’” he said. “That was a really important moment in my career, because while I wasn’t hiding it, I was still not revealing completely who I was. And once I did, people understood my relationship better with my co-host.”

Shortly after that segment, a 17-year-old boy called into the show to get advice about coming out to his parents.

The next day, the boy called back to tell them he did it and everything went great.

“[It’s worth it] if just one person feels more comfortable by waking up and seeing me on television and being like, ‘Oh, I’m not alone, I’m not different,’” O’Shea said. “I think that visibility is just so important.”

Waters said O’Shea and the GMW team’s appeal to the community that people see on screen is what they see in real life.

Waters said she was nervous to meet O’Shea for the first time 10 years ago, as she assumed he would be a “buttoned-up entertainment reporter.” But when she got to know him, she realized he was authentic and attracted to the simple things in life.

“You give him vodka soda, the same meal every week at Annie’s and a good conversation,” Waters said. “It’s crazy, because he travels the world and gets to do all of these different excursions and experiences for the show. But I think he values being with us most and in our community in D.C., having a good time.”

It’s the vibrant and supportive D.C. community that O’Shea said keeps him grounded in the area.

“After moving here and finding great friends, a great community, a great job and supportive coworkers — I’m going to keep riding this one as long as I possibly can,” O’Shea said. (Clinton Engelberger)



*Runner-Up: Chuck Bell, NBC4*

## **Best LGBTQ Event: Capital Pride**

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

2000 14th St., N.W.





What's D.C. without Capital Pride — the crown jewel of all Pride events in the nation's capital? Not only does this yearly event attract tens of thousands of attendees from all over the world, it is a celebration of the color and vibrancy the D.C. LGBTQ scene has to offer. And 2025 promises to be the biggest year yet for Capital Pride as the city prepares to host World Pride, which is expected to bring 2 million visitors to D.C. in May and June.

**Editor's Choice:** *Pride Run 5K*

## **Best Pride Outside of D.C: Baltimore Pride**

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



One of the buzziest events of the summer, Baltimore Pride is a showcase for the beauty of Baltimore's LGBTQ scene. It features a parade and festival with plenty of diverse vendors and a less corporate vibe than many other urban Pride celebrations.

***Editor's Choice: Annapolis Pride***



## Best Clergy: Bishop. Thomas Wieczorek

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*(Photo courtesy of Wieczorek)*

Thomas Wieczorek's popularity as a longstanding clergy member and priest with the D.C.-based affiliate parish of St. Mary's National Catholic Church of North America prompted his fellow priests and bishops in 2022 to elect him as an auxiliary bishop.

Rather than a breakaway version of the Roman Catholic Church, Wieczorek describes the National Catholic Church of North America as an independent Catholic Church that ordains married, LGBTQ clergy and "welcomes and affirms ALL to the table." He holds a weekly virtual church service via Facebook Live to meet the needs of what he calls an active community that offers sacraments including baptism, Eucharist, confirmation, and marriage.

He also notes that his wide-ranging "chapters in life" include being a newspaper reporter, police officer, fire chief, public safety director, and city manager. As if that were not enough, he is an owner and partner in a consulting firm that assists local governments with public safety issues throughout the U.S. and Canada and is the father of two and grandfather of seven.

*Runner-up: Rev. Ashley Goff*

## **Best House of Worship: Sixth & I**

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

600 I St., N.W.



Washington Blade | Michael Key

This historic synagogue is a non-denominational, non-membership, non-traditional Jewish congregation. It is one of the oldest synagogues in the city and is well-known for hosting many lectures, concerts, and art exhibitions for the general public.

**Editor's Choice:** *Metropolitan Community Church of Washington, D.C.*



## Most Committed Activist: Rayceen Pendarvis

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Rayceen Pendarvis has once again been selected as Most Committed Activist in the role of longtime event moderator, emcee, entertainer, and LGBTQ rights advocate. Pendarvis became a well-known and admired figure in the local LGBTQ community as host of the “Ask Rayceen Show,” a live monthly variety program that had a 10-year run from 2012 to 2021.

Pendarvis has also served as an elected D.C. Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner, and has hosted multiple fundraisers, Pride celebrations, arts festivals, talent shows, fashion shows, and other events. In June of 2021, the D.C. Council unanimously approved a resolution recognizing Pendarvis’s accomplishments that it said made D.C. a better city. And that same year, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser issued a mayoral proclamation recognizing the contributions of Pendarvis and the “Ask Rayceen Show.”

Since 2014, with the help of associate Zar, Pendarvis has been the lead public figure in the organization Team Rayceen Productions, which organizes a wide range of LGBTQ community events, many of which are broadcast live on its YouTube channel.

**Runner-up:** Ashley Smith

## Best D.C. Public Official: Christina Henderson

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Washington Blade | Michael Key

D.C. Council member Christina Henderson (I-At Large) has been an outspoken longtime supporter of the LGBTQ community since first winning election to the Council in 2020 as well as in her prior work as a D.C. government official and as Deputy Chief of Staff for former D.C. Council member David Grosso, who was also an outspoken supporter of LGBTQ rights.

In her role as chair of the Council's Committee on Health and as a member of the Committee on The Judiciary and Public Safety, Henderson has backed legislation and policies supportive of LGBTQ issues. She received a +10-candidate rating, the highest possible rating, from the Gay & Lesbian Activists Alliance in her 2020 election campaign, and a +8.5 GLAA rating in her re-election race this year, a rating that GLAA has described as very good.

As she has in past years, Henderson marched in this year's Capital Pride Parade and participated in a Capital Pride "Kick Off" ceremony.

**Runner-up:** Japer Bowles



## Best Daytrip: Annapolis

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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'Leary's 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.

***Editor's Choice:*** *Harpers Ferry*

## Best Local Professional Sports Team: Washington Spirit

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



*(Photo courtesy of Washington Spirit)*

D.C. is a sports city, home to many teams that play hard to earn their touchdowns, homeruns, and goals. This year Blade readers voted the Washington Spirit, our premier professional women's soccer team, as the best local professional sports team. The incredible team is currently ranked second in the NWSL and has consistently supported local LGBTQ groups, like SMYAL. The Spirit understands the importance of playing hard and LGBTQ representation in sports.

***Editor's Choice: DC United***

## **Best Amateur Sports League: Stonewall Bocce**

[stonewallbocce.leagueapps.com](http://stonewallbocce.leagueapps.com)

Logan Circle., N.W.





*(Photo by John Jack Photography; courtesy Stonewall Bocce)*

A first-time winner in this category, Stonewall Bocce has grown from 80 members in its 2011 debut season to more than 780 players today. The league combines friendly competition with a strong commitment to the local community: As part of the nonprofit Stonewall Sports, Inc., the league's mission is to donate 80 percent of its profits to local organizations that support those in need. Each of the 58 teams — sporting witty names such as My Bocce My Choice, Son of a Bocce, and Ball Me Maybe — gets to pick its own charity to support. Games are held every Thursday at 6:45 p.m. at Logan Circle and happy hour socials are regularly hosted at local spots.

***Editor's Choice: DC Gay Flag Football***

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

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

1517 18th St., N.W.



Washington Blade | Michael Key

More than 250 voices strong, the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington delivers electrifying performances that blend song, dance, and storytelling. Featuring three vocal ensembles, a youth chorus, and a dance troupe, the group has become a staple of the music scene in D.C. and beyond. As part of the "Equality Tour," the chorus has spread the message of "equality, dignity, and justice" in cities across the country. In 2025, the GMCW will host a two-week International Choral Festival for World Pride, in which choruses from across the U.S. will join GMCW for "pop-up" concerts at various venues near the National Mall. Don't miss their upcoming fall cabaret at the Keegan Theater on Oct. 19, or catch the always popular Holiday Show returning on Dec. 7.

**Editor's Choice:** *DC Gay Girls Plus*

**Best Non-Profit:** **SMYAL**

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





Washington Blade | Michael Key

SMYAL remains a cornerstone for LGBTQ youth in the D.C. area. Through its after-school programs, counseling services, and development opportunities, SMYAL provides queer and trans youth with safe spaces to express themselves, find support, and build community. In addition, the organization awards \$35,000 in scholarships to students each year and also provides vital education and training for adults working with LGBTQ youth in schools, housing programs, local government agencies, and hospitals. SMYAL has pioneered innovative initiatives, including its Youth Housing Program, which is the largest LGBTQ youth housing provider in the DMV. This program offers more than 55 residents LGBTQ-affirming care and personalized services designed to help them achieve sustainable independence. Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, SMYAL continues to empower LGBTQ youth, ensuring they have the resources and support necessary to thrive.

***Editor's Choice:*** Capital Pride Alliance

## **Best LGBTQ Community Center Outside of D.C.: CAMP Rehoboth**

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

37 Baltimore Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.



CAMP Rehoboth is an invaluable LGBTQ+ community center serving southern Delaware and beyond that is committed to fostering inclusivity for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Founded in the 1990s as a response to backlash against growing queer visibility in Rehoboth Beach, the organization has since become an essential force in building a safer, more accepting community. Describing itself as “an oasis and a voice for members of the LGBTQ+ community,” CAMP Rehoboth continues to look ahead with its strategic plan, “Pride in Progress,” which focuses on expanding its programs and services beyond Rehoboth Beach to maximize its impact. The center has also published Letters from CAMP Rehoboth, a free monthly newsletter chronicling LGBTQ+ life in the area, since its founding.

*Editor's Choice: Pride Center of Maryland*

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





From challenges on the Metro to crime in the DMV, local elections, and cool things to do when you're entertaining out-of-town guests, Washingtonian Problems spotlights the best — and, often, the worst — that our Nation's Capital has to offer.

*Editor's Choice: Queer Talk DC*

## BUSINESS

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### Best Local Businessperson: Freddie Lutz, Freddie's Beach Bar

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Washington Blade | Michael Key

Freddie Lutz, the owner of Freddie's Beach Bar and Restaurant in the Crystal City section of Arlington, Va., since 2001, has been recognized as a leading figure in support of the LGBTQ community and community business development in the section of Arlington where Freddie's is located known as National Landing.

In 2018, Lutz opened his second business in Crystal City, Federico's Ristorante Italiano, which is located on the same block on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street as Freddie's Beach Bar and in the same building in which the iconic Café Italia was located and where Lutz began his career in the restaurant business in the 1970s as the Maitre'd. In October of 2021, Lutz opened a Freddie's Beach Bar and Restaurant in Rehoboth Beach, Del.

Lutz has referred to Freddie's in Arlington and Rehoboth as "straight friendly" gay bars, where he has said everyone supportive of the LGBTQ community, especially those considered allies, are welcome. The entertainment offered at Freddie's, including karaoke, drag bingo, and highly popular drag shows, have drawn large crowds. Also drawing crowds have been the LGBTQ community events such as fundraisers that Freddie's has hosted.

Among the many honors and awards received by Lutz and Freddie's Beach Bar was the 2017 Arlington County Human Rights Commission's Human Rights Award honoring Freddie's for its "outstanding accomplishments" in advancing human rights.

"I'm extremely proud of what I've done at Freddie's, with all the diversity and the accolades," Lutz told the Blade. "But I've always felt like I left my heart at Cafe Italia and now Federico's."

*Runner-up: Russwin Francisco, Bite the Fruit*

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

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[whitman-walker.org](http://whitman-walker.org)

Multiple locations



Washington Blade | Michael Key

Whitman-Walker Health has been serving D.C. 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.

### ***Editor's Choice: AIDS Healthcare Foundation***

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



## **Best Lawyer: A.J. Singletary**

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*(Photo courtesy of Singletary)*

A.J. Singletary works on clean air and climate law, policy and transactions as a lawyer with Van Ness Feldman.

He represents renewable energy developers, power plant operators, vehicle and engine manufacturers, policy institutes and related clients on matters including strategic direction related to environmental law and policy, air quality permits under the Clean Air Act, regulation of vehicle emissions, new and existing climate change laws and regulations and offshore wind development.

Singletary, who's gay, is also a mental health advocate and shares his experiences being bipolar and sober to reduce stigma around mental health.

***Runner-up: Amy Nelson***

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

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

5454 Wisconsin Ave., N.W.





(Photo courtesy of Martin)



Dr. Gregory Martin and his team are committed to creating an environment where everyone feels respected, heard and valued. They deliver dental care comprehensively, scientifically, and cosmetically to focus on the mouth/body connection at every step.

Dr. Martin's comprehensive approach offers a full complement of modern, digital and precise dentistry adjacent to a complete suite of pioneering state-of-the-art medical grade aesthetics ensuring that oral health and confidence always goes far beyond the smile. He's openly gay.

Dr. Martin's office offers free tattoo removal for all patients, one of many extras available. Dr. Martin is a native to the D.C. area and a graduate of the University of Maryland School of Dentistry.

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

## **Best Private School: Barrie School**

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13500 Layhill Rd.

Silver Spring, Md.



*(Screen capture of Barrie School via YouTube)*

Barrie School bills itself as a “progressive independent school that inspires excellence, intrinsic motivation and responsibility through innovation in learning.”

With students starting at 3 months of age through grade 12, the Silver Spring, Md.-based school features a 45-acre campus that boasts an “extraordinary learning environment integrating local, national and global educational opportunities.”

**Editor's Choice:** *Burgundy Farm Country Day School*

## **Best Real Estate Agent: Stacey Williams-Zeiger, Zeiger Realty**

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



10300 Sweetbriar Pkwy

Silver Spring, Md.



*(Photo courtesy Williams-Zieger; background by Michael Key/Washington Blade)*

Zeiger Realty real estate offers brokerage services in Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. This award-winning company doesn't only buy and sell houses, it's committed to building a welcoming community.

***Runner-up:*** Taylor Carney, Compass

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

[bediz.com](https://bediz.com)

1918 18th St., N.W.

Bediz Group is a team of nine real estate agents with Keller Williams, one of the largest realty firms in the DMV. This firm is no stranger to five-star reviews and awards for its exceptional work. It offers a comprehensive suite of real estate services and is here to assist sellers, buyers, investors, tenants, and landlords.

***Runner-up:*** Jenn Smira Team, Compass

**Best Med Spa:** ProMD Health

[promdhealth.com](https://promdhealth.com)

1003 K St., N.W.



*(Photo courtesy of ProMD Health)*

This spot provides anti-aging treatments, Botox and hormone therapy for patients in the D.C. area. This place is a state-of-the-art medical facility specializing in non-surgical aesthetic treatments and procedures to help patients look younger and feel younger. Whether your goals are prevention, treating a skin concern, looking like you did 10 years ago, or feeling like you did 10 years ago, ProMD Health has something for everyone.



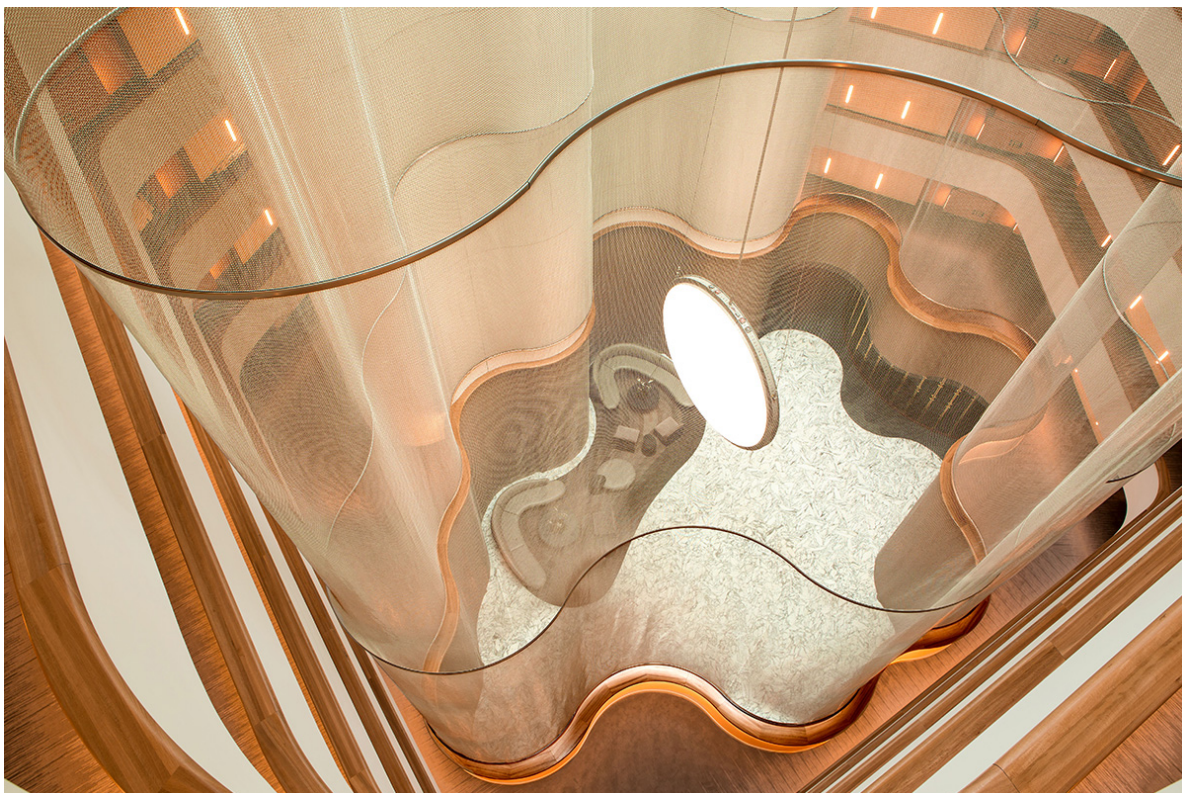
*Editor's Choice: Honey Skincare Studio*

## **Best Hotel: Conrad**

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

950 New York Ave., N.W.



*(Photo courtesy of Conrad)*

A self-described “unexpected urban oasis,” this hotel is where you go to experience modern luxury in D.C. With an art-forward approach to contemporary luxury, Conrad invites guests to experience D.C. through the lens of a local resident of the District and enjoy the culture and color that makes our nation’s capital one of the most incredible cities in the world.

*Editor's Choice: Eaton DC*

## **Best Tattoo Parlor: Tattoo Paradise**

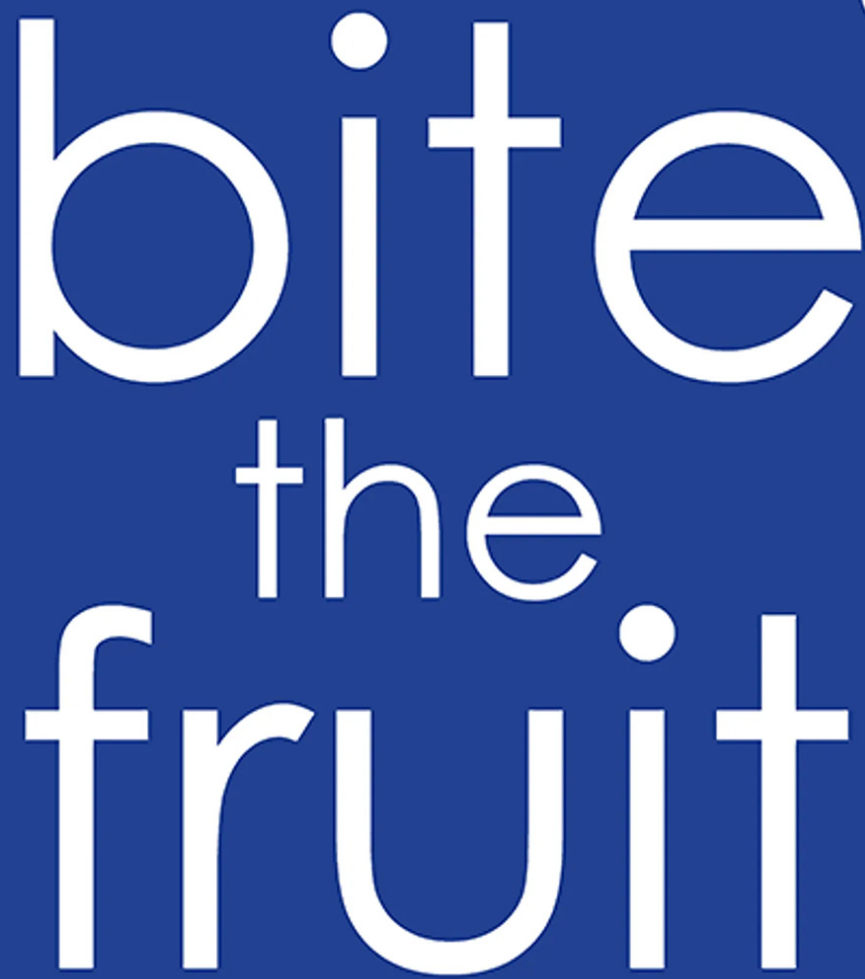
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[tattooparadisedc.com](http://tattooparadisedc.com)

2444 18th St., N.W.







# bite the fruit

The age of pleasure never ends and where else to grab the best tools than here? Bite the Fruit is a peerless adult boutique shop of provocative apparel and sexual furnishings. As the store itself says, "Play like nobody's watching!"

*Editor's Choice: What's Your Pleasure D.C.*

## **Best Car Dealership: BMW of Fairfax**

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

8427 Lee Hwy, Fairfax, VA



Looking for a sleek, classy car that'll get you all the compliments? BMW of Fairfax has got you covered. Not only do the car dealers here provide great customer service and help you find the car of your dreams, they have access to Sonic's nationwide inventory of new and pre-owned BMWs so you can find exactly what you're looking for.

***Editor's Choice:*** DARCARS

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

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

Multiple locations





*(Photo courtesy of VIDA Fitness)*

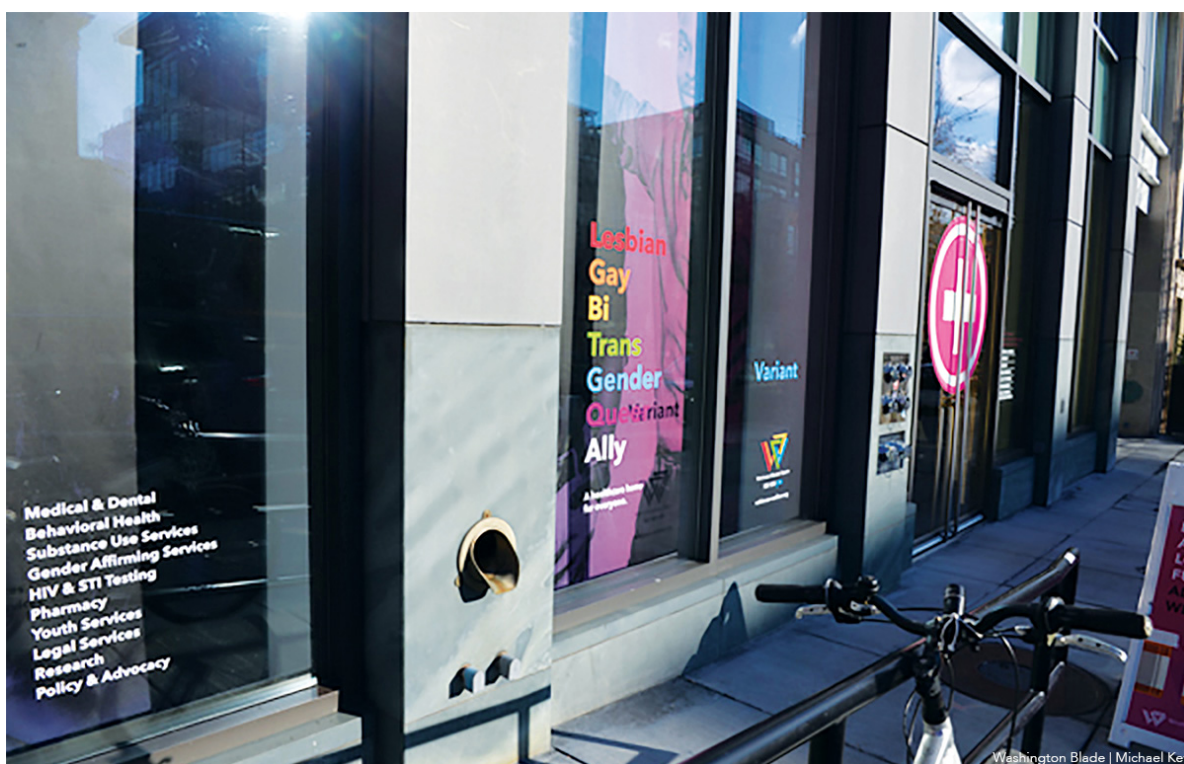
With amenities like private personal training sessions, classes taught by nationally accredited coaches, state-of-the-art equipment, and the exclusive Penthouse Pool, Vida Fitness is understandably one of the DMV's most known gyms. Vida Fitness is more than just a gym; it's a community hub for LGBTQ individuals looking to stay active. Its inclusive environment and regular LGBTQ-friendly events make it a standout spot for fitness and social connections alike.

**Editor's Choice:** *[solidcore]*

## **Most LGBTQ-Friendly Workplace: Whitman-Walker Health**

[whitman-walker.org](http://whitman-walker.org)

1525 14th St., N.W.



Whitman-Walker Health, the 2023 winner of the “Medical Provider” category, is not only dedicated to patient care but also to the well-being of its employees. Located at Logan Circle, the organization is a pillar in D.C.’s LGBTQ community, known for offering stigma-free healthcare and legal services. As one of the first organizations to respond to the HIV/AIDS crisis in the city, Whitman-Walker continues to lead through the Whitman-Walker Institute, which emphasizes education and advocacy, while housing a research center pursuing breakthroughs in HIV treatment and prevention. Employees receive a generous benefit package that includes tuition reimbursement, continuing education funds, and domestic partnership benefits.

***Editor’s Choice: Stratus Firm***

## **Best Home Furnishings: Miss Pixie’s**

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[misspixies.com](https://misspixies.com)

1830 Columbia Rd., N.W.





Washington Blade | Michael Key

Whether you've just moved to D.C. and need to furnish your apartment or you're searching for that perfect addition to your "whatnots," Miss Pixie's is the go-to spot. The home furnishing store is packed with chairs, tables, couches, bookshelves, paintings, vases, photos, magazines, offering anything "Victorian to yesterday with a bit of midcentury and shabby chic thrown in" that might fancy up your living quarters. This year, Miss Pixie's relocated from 14th Street back to Adams Morgan, a return to the neighborhood where it first opened shop in the late 1990s. Miss Pixie's keeps its 34,000 followers on its Instagram page happy with a steady feed of unique finds — whether it's a framed map of Rehoboth Beach or a charming table-and-chair set for your balcony. Items are affordably priced and new treasures arrive every Thursday and Friday.

**Editor's Choice:** GoodWood

## Best Pet Business or Veterinarian: City Dogs

[city-dogs.com](http://city-dogs.com)

1832 18th St., N.W.



Whether your furry friend needs a quick haircut, a fun day at daycare, or an overnight stay while you're away, City Dogs has it all covered. Locally owned and operated, City Dogs offers a loving, cage-free environment with experienced staff. Their services include grooming, daycare, and boarding, with convenient drop-off and pick-up options. Daycare is especially helpful for new puppies and recently adopted rescue dogs, with City Dogs providing attention and socialization while you're at work. Dogs are grouped by size and play style, with smaller, gentle pups and seniors in one room, and larger, more energetic dogs in another, ensuring a safe and playful experience for every pet.

*Editor's Choice: District Dogs*

### **Best Alternative Transportation: Metro**

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





Washington Blade | Michael Key

Thanks to its exceptional Metro system, D.C. is one of the few cities in the U.S. where you are able to live comfortably without a car. The Metro is fast and reliable — you usually don't wait longer than 10 minutes for the next train — and it's incredibly user-friendly. Stations are not only clean but also feature the iconic concrete arch, with warm, calming lighting enhancing your commuting experience. It's easy to travel across the greater D.C. area: You can get from Nationals Park to U Street, or from Arlington to Dupont Circle, in under 20 minutes. And for areas not directly served by the MetroRail, the extensive MetroBus network provides excellent connectivity. This combination gives D.C. one of the best public transportation systems in the country.

**Editor's Choice:** *Capital Bikeshare*

**Best Salon/Spa: Logan 14**

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

1314 14th St., N.W.



After eight consecutive wins in this category, Logan 14 was voted Most LGBTQ-Friendly Workplace in 2023, but it reclaimed the Best Salon/Spa title this year. Logan 14 offers a wide range of beauty and wellness services, describing itself as “a sanctuary in the middle of busy Washington, D.C.” About 75 percent of its clientele identifies as LGBTQ, and it is staffed by passionate beauty professionals skilled in haircuts, coloring, bridal services, rejuvenating massages and skincare treatments. The medspa features other options such as Botox, fillers, and laser hair removal. Logan 14 exclusively uses Aveda products, due to its environmentally conscious manufacturing. With a focus on inclusivity and exceptional service, Logan 14 continues to be a beloved destination for beauty and wellness in the heart of the city.

*Editor's Choice: Salon Quency*

## REHOBOTH BEACH

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### Best Rehoboth-Area Bartender: Doug Moore, Starboard

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

2009 DE-1

Dewey Beach, Del.





Anyone who's been to the Starboard in Dewey Beach knows Doug Moore, the ever-smiling, energetic bartender and first-time winner in this category.

Moore, who's gay, has worked at the 'board for 17 years, starting in 2007 in the gift shop, then moving to serving, then to bartending. He helped to open the Shark Tank, the Starboard's year-round bar located at the front of the sprawling complex, in 2008 and says that since then, "crushes have taken over."

He has seen a lot of change in 17 years as the area has become "a lot more year round down here, which we love. People are moving here and retiring here so it's amazing. More people are discovering what a great destination the Delaware shore is."

The other big change Moore has seen came in his personal life. He's now nearly five years sober and serves on the board of Attack Addiction, a non-profit that works to de-stigmatize substance abuse.

Moore, who recently turned 40, is single, lives in Rehoboth, and enjoys beach volleyball. He grew up in Bear, Del., and graduated from the University of Delaware. He says he enjoys seeing Rehoboth gay guys migrating to Dewey Beach; he works five days a week, so stop by and say hello.

"We are come one come all at the Starboard," he enthuses. "You'll see everyone from six-month-old babies to a group of gay guys for Sunday brunch to bikers next to nuns next to senior week parties. We put on a good time and everyone is there to have fun."

**Runner-Up:** Zack West, Nalu

## Best Rehoboth Drag Queen: Magnolia Applebottom

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Magnolia has quickly become an iconic figure on the Rehoboth nightlife scene, winning this category multiple times, including last year. She is a tireless performer, taking the stage at venues across Rehoboth Beach and even across Delaware. At Diego's she presides over the popular Splash party, which took this year's award for Best Rehoboth Drag Show. In addition to her inventive costumes and witty banter, Magnolia sings live, which has endeared her to audiences all year long. In addition to her regular duties at Diego's and Blue Moon, she's headlined Salisbury Pride for three years and co-headlined a terrific show with pianist Nate Buccieri in Milton, Del., this summer.

**Runner-up:** Roxy Overbrooke

## Best Rehoboth Drag Show: Splash Party with Magnolia Applebottom at Diego's

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

37298 Rehoboth Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.





Magnolia extends her winning streak to this category, edging out the competition, which is stiff in Rehoboth. Whether she's celebrating Pride or covering Whitney Houston and getting the customers dancing, Mags gives it her all and Rehoboth readers have responded with two resounding wins this year.

*Editor's Choice: Drag Brunch at the Pines*

### **Best Rehoboth-Area Live Show: Pamala Stanley at Diego's**

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

37298 Rehoboth Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.





What can we say about Pamala Stanley that we haven't said before? The Blade crowned her "Queen of Rehoboth" years ago for a reason. She's played multiple venues in town over the years but her latest residency at Diego's feels like a return to the good old days of the Blue Moon, with its indoor-outdoor stage, room for dancing, shirtless shot boys, and over-the-top party vibe. She packed Diego's all summer with her longstanding Sunday night dance party and added a Broadway piano show on Monday nights, both of which will continue through the holidays. Pamala is true talent, wowing crowds with her voice and somehow managing to remember the lyrics to everything from Janet Jackson to Johnny Mathis. We simply can't imagine the town without her.

***Editor's Choice: Games with Magnolia at Blue Moon***

### **Best Rehoboth Outdoor Dining: Purple Parrot**

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

134 Rehoboth Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.





The gay-owned Purple Parrot celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and it remains a local institution. The bar and restaurant, which serve American cuisine with a beach flair, have always focused on being a welcoming space for all. Co-owner Hugh Fuller told the Blade earlier this year that this is one of the reasons why the restaurant has had such a lasting impact.

“Back in the ‘90s when we first opened up, the amount of straight crossdressers that would come were like, ‘Oh, are we allowed to come in? Are we welcomed into a place like that?’ And we were like ‘Everybody that walks on this planet is welcome here!’” Fuller said. “Those are the kinds of things, you know, where people just felt comfortable. They would get stared at out on the street, but inside they would walk around and feel like they were in their own skin. It was just really cool to see.”

The menu includes crab cakes, burgers, quesadillas, and more, along with special prime rib and German cuisine nights. The vibe is decidedly beachy in the Biergarten with sand, an outdoor bar with a roof covered in flowers, and umbrellas.

**Editor's Choice:** *Aqua*

### **Best Rehoboth Coffee Shop: Crystal Restaurant**

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37300 Rehoboth Ave., Ext. 1

Rehoboth Beach, Del.



Washington Blade | Daniel Truitt

Crystal is a new winner in this category, beloved for its diner vibe and affordable, delicious breakfasts, the perfect hangover cure after a long night next door at Diego's. You can certainly pay more for a satisfying plate of eggs, bacon, and hash browns, but why would you? Locals and tourists alike have been flocking here for years for the food, service, and coffee and the Blade's readers have finally taken notice.

***Editor's Choice: Rise Up***

### **Best Rehoboth Restaurant: Blue Moon**

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

35 Baltimore Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.





This category has grown more competitive in recent years with the arrival of The Pines, Drift, and Bodhi Kitchen, all within a stone's throw of the iconic Moon. The proprietors of Second Block Hospitality Group, which owns those three popular spots, even won Restaurateurs of the Year from the Delaware Restaurant Association earlier this month. But the Blue Moon is standing strong and is beloved by Blade readers for its longevity, year-round entertainment, and, of course, its food. The popular Tasting Tuesday returned last month and runs through the off-season, offering discounted three-course dinners with wine pairings. Sunday brunch remains among the best in town. A visit to Rehoboth simply isn't complete without a stop at the Moon.

***Editor's Choice:*** *Henlopen City Oyster House*

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

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

16698 Kings Highway A

Lewes, Del.



*(Photo courtesy Lee Ann Wilkinson)*

This category was closer than in recent years, but Lee Ann Wilkinson stays on top for an unprecedented seventh consecutive year. Maybe we should name this award after her?

Wilkinson, of Berkshire Hathaway, earlier this year celebrated a major industry award after being named No. 1 in total sales volume for the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Network. She's an LGBTQ ally and the Blade profiled her in May. She told us then, "I grew up coming down for the summer until my family moved here full-time from Norristown, outside of Philly. We had businesses and family in Rehoboth. I think Rehoboth has always been gay-friendly. We never thought about it. My grandfather had a house in Rehoboth before I was born. The gay population was always welcome."

Three of Wilkinson's four daughters work for her and she told the Blade she has no plans to retire anytime soon. So we could see the family in this category again.

***Runner-up: Andy Staton***



## Best Rehoboth Business: Diego's

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

37298 Rehoboth Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.



Diego's pivoted during COVID and added an expansive outdoor bar area that has proven exceedingly popular with LGBTQ crowds. Owners Darryl and Joe Ciarlante-Zuber opened in 2018 and have done an exceptional job of programming the non-stop entertainment, including drag shows, world-renowned DJs, and the aforementioned Pamala Stanley. The bartenders are always welcoming and efficient, keeping the large crowds satisfied. Diego's has become the go-to place for late-night dancing and remains popular at happy hour and, of course, on Sundays.

***Editor's Choice: Aqua Bar & Grill***



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."

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(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.

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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.



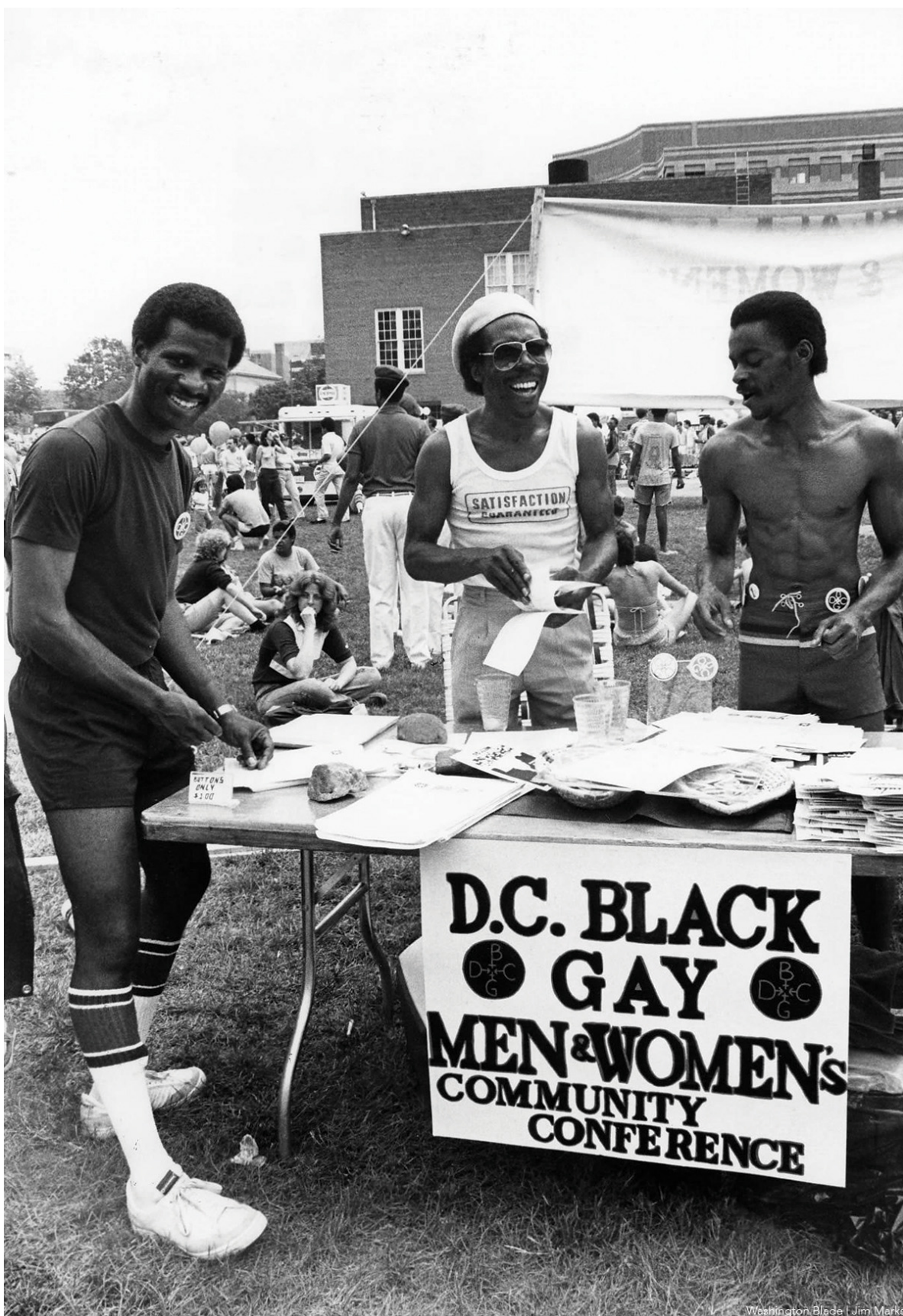
*The 1995 Lesbian and Gay Freedom Festival was held on Freedom Plaza on June 18.  
(Washington Blade archive photo by Clint Steib)*

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)*



Washington Blade | Doug Hinckle

*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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