

## Best of LGBTQ DC 2022

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Staff reports

October 20, 2022



It was a big year for local businesses as we finally put COVID restrictions behind us and returned to a new normal that included a fully restored Pride celebration. With events like theater and popular fundraisers back to in-person operations, it's an exciting year to assemble Best Of.

More than 4,000 nominations and 30,000 votes were cast in more than 60 categories for the 21st annual Best Of awards. The Blade's Stephen Rutgers coordinated the process. Michael Key served as photo editor for the project and shot the cover. This year's contributing writers are Patrick Folliard, Tinashe Chingarande, Parker Purifoy, Lou Chibbaro Jr., Evan Caplan, Michael K. Lavers, and Kevin Naff. Congratulations to all of the nominees, finalists, and winners. Thank you to our sponsors ABSOLUT, PEPCO, Eaton DC, and The Washington Regional Transplant Community.

## Local Hero: Kimberley Bush

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*Kimberley Bush (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

In her eight years in leadership positions at the D.C. Center for the LGBT Community, including her appointment in February of this year as its executive director, Kimberley Bush has witnessed first-hand the full diversity of D.C.'s LGBTQ community.

Before being named Interim Executive Director of the D.C. Center in October 2019, Bush served as the Center's Director of Arts & Cultural Programs. The Center programs she headed in that position, which she continues to oversee in her executive director's post, provide a vivid account of her involvement and interaction with the many LGBTQ people who got to know and admire her.

Among other duties, she has played a lead role in these D.C. Center programs: Reel Affirmation: DC's International LGBTQ Film Festival and Monthly Film Series; the Center Arts Gallery; Arty Queens: DC's LGBTQ Indoor Art Market; Outwrite: DC's LGBTQ Literary Festival; and DC Queer Theater Theatre Festival.

"In her role as Director of Arts & Cultural Programs, Kimberley has demonstrated a sense of innovation and ambition in the projects she has taken on," the D.C. Center's Board of Directors said in a statement at the time it named Bush as Interim Executive Director.

"The Reel Affirmations program, which Kimberley had been involved with for more than 15 years, has been ranked in the top three LGBTQ film festivals in the country," the statement says. "Though a New York native, Kimberley has lived in the D.C. area for thirty years and has become an accomplished leader in the community."

Before switching careers to her leadership roles with Reel Affirmations and the D.C. Center, Bush says she worked for more than 12 years as a property management executive and Realtor as well as a ceramic artist.



In addition to the D.C. Center's Arts & Culture Programs, Bush currently oversees programs related to health and wellness, social and peer support, and advocacy and community building. She also oversees the Center's accommodation of numerous local LGBTQ groups ranging from political to social, LGBTQ seniors, families, and people with disabilities, which have used the D.C. Center's offices at 2000 14th St., N.W. as their meeting place.

When the full force of the COVID pandemic hit the city in 2020 Bush played a lead role, along with the D.C. Center's staff and board, in arranging for the programs and the community meetings it hosted to switch from in-person events to virtual events.

"I am extremely proud to be able to continue to guide our small yet mighty team at the DC Center for the LGBT Community through these extraordinarily challenging times into brighter chapters of our lives, as we provide safe and peaceful space as well as the much-needed support, kindness, outreach, care, celebration and affirmation to our LGBTQIA2S+ community," Bush told the Blade.

Bush's next challenge will involve overseeing the D.C. Center's move to a new location. The city's Reeves Center municipal building, where the Center rents its office space, is scheduled to be demolished to make way for a new city sponsored development project, requiring all its occupants to vacate the building at a yet undisclosed time.

"I, our team and board of directors firmly believe our new home is in a location that is accessible to our community," she said. "I cannot state just yet where the new location will be nor when the move will occur but as soon as we can share that exciting news with the community, believe me, we will!"

## EATING & DRINKING

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### Best LGBTQ Bar: Number Nine



*Number Nine (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

1435 P St., N.W.

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

### Runner-up: As You Are Bar

Nested in the heart of Logan Circle in Northwest D.C., this bar is a bi-level queer space that offers inventive cocktails. The second level also has a video bar outfitted with multiple TVs so guests can watch their favorite shows, teams, movies, special events, and music videos.

### Best Bartender: Dusty Martinez, Trade



*Dusty Martinez (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

### Editor's Choice: Jo McDaniel, As You Are Bar

Dusty Martinez has proven that he's a fan favorite in the city (winning this category for the second year in a row) when it comes to making mouth-watering drinks that keep guests coming back for more. In fact, he's so good at what he does that he was nominated for this award four previous times and won in 2014 and 2017. As he's said in the past, he always tries to have fun with Best of LGBTQ D.C.

"Anytime the bar is nominated for something, I try to make some funny videos and images to add to my feed," he said when he won last year. "I really try to make light of it. It's both an honor and delight to even be nominated."

### Best Neighborhood Bar: Red Bear Brewing





*Red Bear Brewing Co. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

209 M St., N.E.

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

Editor's Choice: Dirty Goose

Red Bear Brewing is no stranger to this list, returning as the winner of this category for the second year in a row. This gay-owned venue in the District hosts several types of events including drag shows, trivia, and stand-up performances. But at the heart of what it does is brewing in-house beers and serving classic bar food in the heart of NoMa. While guests chow down on a satisfyingly greasy burger, they can sip on one of the bar's creatively named drinks— "Hefe Don't Preach," "OktoBEARfest," or "Tall, Dark and Nutty," to name a few.

**Best LGBTQ-Owned Business: KNEAD Hospitality + Design**



*KNEAD founders (Photo by Connor Studios)*

Editor's Choice: Urban Adventures (Vida Fitness, Bang Salon, Penthouse Pool Club)

D.C.-based KNEAD Hospitality + Design founders and co-owners (and partners for more than 20 years) Jason Berry and Michael Reginbogin envisioned big plans for their rapidly expanding business. KNEAD owns, operates, and designed its own restaurants over a varying range of concepts and cuisines.

Berry and Reginbogin have pulled off more than 10 restaurant openings, from fine-dining to fast-casual, Mexican to French.

"It is such an honor to win," Berry and Reginbogin said. "We are a born and bred Washington, D.C. company and have been working diligently to share excellent dining experiences throughout the area. This award recognizes the dedication we have to D.C."

Some of their celebrated restaurants include Mi Vida, Succotash, and Gatsby.

"As an LGBTQ+ owned-and-operated restaurant group, it's important that we actively raise awareness toward diversity and inclusion. We proudly support the LGBTQ+ community through sponsorships, donations and participating in events during Pride month each year that continue to create awareness. It is opportunities like this we're we can use our platform to create awareness and make a difference in our own communities."

**Most LGBT-Friendly Workplace: EatWell DC**





# eatwelldc

Editor's Choice: Whitman-Walker Health

EatWell, a locally owned and operated restaurant group, has planted its flag firmly in the Logan Circle area for more than two decades. EatWell DC operates five restaurants: Grillfish in the West End; Logan Tavern, Commissary, and The Pig in Logan Circle, and The Charles in La Plata, Md.

According to its website, "We care about people, our staff, our guests, and our planet and truly believe business can coexist comfortably, safely and proactively."

EatWell owns its own farm in La Plata, to bring local produce into its restaurants.

Logan Tavern won Best Restaurant in 2020 and 2021. Logan Tavern also won Best Bloody Mary in 2018 and Best Date Restaurant in 2012.

**Best Coffee Shop: Compass Coffee**



*Compass Coffee (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Multiple locations

[Compasscoffee.com](https://compasscoffee.com)

Editor's Choice: Tatte Bakery & Café

Founded in 2014 by two Marines, Michael Haft and Harrison Suarez, Compass Coffee has 15 brick and mortar cafés in the Washington area, plus one roasting facility in Ivy City. Compass Coffee can be found in many local restaurants and grocery stores across the mid-Atlantic. The company aims to source its coffee as ethically as possible.

"While the roaster is no stranger to this award—Compass had five consecutive wins in this category through 2022—the Compass Team is incredibly honored to win this year," says Compass VP Max Deem.

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





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

713 8<sup>th</sup> St., S.E.

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

Editor's Choice: Mi Vida

Owner Shane Mayson's vibrant restaurant Crazy Aunt Helen's debuted last July on Barracks Row, just a few days after Pride concluded.

"We are thrilled to have been nominated in the 3 categories! We've only been open for a little more than a year, and to be receiving this attention makes us feel like we are on the right path," says Mayson.

"We have begun making donations to LGBTQIA organizations and have hosted happy hours for our community organizations. We hope as we grow, we are able to do even more."

The food is solidly American, with Mayson's creative twists. Appetizers include items like fried green tomatoes, and entrees include chicken fried steak smothered in chicken sausage gravy. Yet many of the dishes are also vegan and vegetarian, too.

"We serve American comfort food that we hope will make everyone feel like they've been given a big hug," says Mayson. We have put together a vibrant showcase of mostly local entertainment with monthly "headliners" just to whet your whistle." Events include shows, book readings, a ladies' tea dance, play readings, bingo, and more.

**Best Brunch: Duplex Diner**



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

2004 18<sup>th</sup> St., N.W.

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

#### Editor's Choice: Perry's Drag Brunch

Duplex Diner opened its doors in 1998, as a safe and fun space for the LGBTQ community, perhaps best known for its lemon squeezes.

The longstanding, much-loved neighborhood spot snatched up the highly competitive Best Brunch spot this year. Drag queens, fundraisers, and team events all help to bring a fun energy to Duplex brunch, which it serves on Saturdays and Sundays.

"Duplex Diner is so honored to be nominated in this category, especially as brunches are the staff's favorite shifts," says General Manager Kelly Laczko. "We have worked hard to develop brunch and feel it has a great vibe."

Duplex serves brunch faves from chicken and waffles to Benedicts and omelets. Mimosas go for a mere \$5, and espresso martinis have found their way onto the menu, too.

Laczko is one of the co-chairs of the SMYAL Brunch, and ensures that Duplex has a close relationship with SMYAL as well as other local LGBTQ organizations.

"The 'Queer Cheers' is a place to come by yourself or with a group of friends to grab a bite for brunch or dinner. We would be nowhere without the love and support of our regulars and are so happy to serve as a neighborhood space that is inclusive of all," says Laczko.

#### **Best Outdoor Dining: Annie's Paramount Steakhouse**





*Outdoor seating at Annie's Paramount Steakhouse. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

1609 17<sup>th</sup> St., N.W.

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

Editor's Choice: Shaw's Tavern

Taking the prize for the third year in a row, a Washington pillar Annie's Paramount Steakhouse offers a variety of hearty American dishes including burgers and salads for lunch, savory omelets and benedicts for brunch and classic steaks for dinner.

According to owner Paul Katinas in an earlier interview with the Blade, "Annie's became home, and was there when there weren't too many other opportunities or places to go. During a time when the LGBTQ community was struggling to find places where they were accepted, the restaurant was always a welcoming and loving environment."

Katinas's daughter Georgia added that, "Annie's is honored to be nominated by the Blade and supported by the community. We absolutely love hearing that our space brings joy to people."

As for the Streatery that they constructed during the pandemic, "Our Streatery has been wonderful for business, a great way to keep more people employed and we believe has brought tremendous value to 17<sup>th</sup> Street. We do our best to keep our space beautiful and exciting and truly believe in the Streatery program"

Annie's will turn 75 in 2023, with a host of special events and offerings throughout the coming year.

**Best Outdoor Drinking: Uproar**



*Uproar Lounge (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

639 Florida Ave., N.W.

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

Editor's Choice: Pitchers

Nominated as Best Neighborhood Bar in 2021, Uproar won best outdoor drinking spot for its high-energy, third-floor rooftop. Perhaps best known for its Beer Bust every Sunday afternoon, it also hosts drag shows, karaoke, gaymers events, international nights, and much more.

Unlike many other D.C. LGBTQ bars, Uproar also serves an extensive menu of bar food, from mozzarella sticks to sliders to wings – and offers many of those snacks on the rooftop on Sundays.

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





*Dacha Beer Garden (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

79 Potomac Ave., S.E. (Navy Yard) and 1600 7<sup>th</sup> St., N.W. (Shaw)

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

Editor's Choice: Wundergarten

Fresh off its win from last year, gay-owned Dacha has won this award yet again. Dacha has two locations (Shaw and Navy Yard) offering a variety of German, Belgian, and American craft beers, among its many offerings. Dacha previously won Best Outdoor Drinking in 2018 and 2019 and Best Straight Bar for five consecutive years until 2019. The outdoor beer garden is a favorite for its all-weather atmosphere, pet friendliness, and ginormous pretzels.

On Sept. 4, 2013, Dacha Beer Garden opened as a small beer truck with a makeshift bar, a few picnic tables, and port-a-potties in a small vacant lot on 7<sup>th</sup> Street N.W. The owners opened a café and loft in the adjacent building, on which they commissioned a now-Instagram-worthy three-story painting of Liz Taylor. The bar has expanded from a short list of German beers to include cocktails, alcohol-free drinks, sangria, and cider.

**Best Burger: Slash Run**





*Slash Run (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

201 Upshur St., N.W.

Editor's Choice: Duke's Grocery

The divey Slash Run, located in Petworth, promotes three things: beer, burgers, and rock 'n' roll. Taking home the award for Best Burger, the bar opened in 2015. It already has some burger accolades, voted 2nd Best Burger in the city by Washington City Paper 2019. The bar allows diners to choose one of five protein options and nine styles, from the Otto's Shrunken Head (Korean BBQ, pork rinds, avocado, pineapple relish) to the I'll Have What She's Having (sunny side up egg, shaved-fried Brussels sprouts finished with Siracha aioli and served on pretzel bun). The bar also has 15 draft beers, 100 whiskeys, and an impressive list of live shows, parties, and neighborhood events.

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



Washington Blade | Michael Key

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

1925 14<sup>th</sup> St., N.W.

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

Editor's Choice: Ice Cream Jubilee

Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams is devoted to making better ice creams and bringing people together, according to its website. Packaged in Instagram-worthy colorful cups, Jeni's ice creams have a "uniquely smooth texture and buttercream body" that allow one to savor the sweetness of flavors like birthday cake and fruit crumble.

**Best Pizza: Andy's Pizza**



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

2016 9<sup>th</sup> St., N.W.

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

Editor's Choice: Timber Pizza

Andy's Pizza serves up pizza straight from the long and storied New York tradition. Featuring stone deck ovens, long-fermented dough, Wisconsin mozzarella, California tomatoes, and a skilled pizzaiolo, this neighborhood pizzeria brings New York to D.C. while serving classic combinations. Andy's now boasts six spots across the area, including one spot in Shaw across from 9:30 club and mere feet from popular bars Dirty Goose and Kiki.

The pizzeria serves pizza by the slice in favorite options like pepperoni and white sauce, but the whole pies come in a range of flavors with both classic and modern options, including a vegan pie with plant-based cheese.

"I am a local, born and bred in the DMV," says Andy Brown, owner and head pizzaiolo. "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!"

As to why Andy's Pizza makes a great winner, he concluded that, "There aren't a lot of restaurants you would visit at 3am and for lunch!"

**Best Local Winery: Montifalco Vineyard**





*(Photo courtesy of Montifalco Vineyards)*

1800 Fray Rd., Ruckersville, Va.

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

Editor's Choice: City Winery

It's official. DMV oenophiles love Montifalco Vineyard. The delightful family farm winery in Ruckersville, Va., a small town not far from Charlottesville in the beautiful Monticello American Viticultural Area of Virginia, has again come out on top as fan favorite among Blade readers.

Still owned and operated by sommelier and winemaker Justin Falco, Montifalco Vineyard derives inspiration from traditional family farm wineries of the French countryside. With its friendly, unpretentious atmosphere, Falco's vineyard remains committed to high standards; Montifalco adheres to the fusion of Old World tradition and New World taste and flavor, creating small batch boutique wines with distinct personality. And yes, well-behaved, leashed pooches continue to be welcome.

**Best ABSOLUT Happy Hour: Kiki**



*Kiki (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

915 U St., N.W.

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

Editor's Choice: Larry's Lounge

Kiki, an LGBTQ bar located in Shaw, is fast approaching its one-year anniversary. This spot offers a safe space for LGBTQ individuals by hosting drag shows and availing its dance floor to anyone who wants to shimmy, do the splits, and completely lose themselves to music. Kiki offers four different bar areas — a beer garden, a sports-themed bar, lounge areas, and a dance floor.

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





*Red Bear Brewing Co. (Washington Blade photo by Zach Brien)*

209 M St., N.E.

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

Editor's Choice: DC Brau

One win isn't enough for Red Bear, it had to return for more accolades. This fan favorite and LGBTQ-friendly bar also cares about the environment. Red Bear is currently working toward a "Pending B Corporation Status," which will become fully "Certified" after one year of operations, according to its website. This certificate is awarded to a business that has met the highest standards of social and environmental performance, transparency and legal accountability. Additionally, the bar creates its own furniture from reclaimed wood.

**Best Local Distillery: Republic Restoratives Distillery**





*Republic Restoratives (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

1369 New York Ave., N.E.

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

Editor's Choice: Cotton & Reed

This women-owned, community-led and District-made distillery offers top notch spirits. The company “[celebrates] an outspoken and disruptive attitude towards the production of quality American spirits,” according to its website. Some of the spirits it offers include the Borough Bourbon, a five-year-old high-rye bourbon boldly finished in 50-year-old Armagnac casks. This year-round whiskey has hints of dried fruits, worn leather, and rich candied nuts.

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

**Best Drag Queen: Cake Pop!**



*Cake Pop! (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Runner-up: Vagenesis

This year's most glittery award goes to this queen whose Instagram bio reads, "A party without cake is just a meeting." Like other legendary drag queens whose performances have riveted audiences and inspired young children to be confident in their identity, Cake Pop! exists to celebrate Black queer bodies. Whether she's wearing her hair in towering afro puffs or ginger-colored tightly-coiled curls, the Regent University, a Christian college, graduate proves to the world that "[the] conversion therapy didn't work," according to her Instagram.

**Best Drag King: Molasses**





***Molasses*** (*Washington Blade* photo by Michael Key)

Runner-up: Rico Pico

King Molasses is an avid impersonator of Canadian superstar Alannah Myles, who dominated the charts in the early 1990s. They are also a co-producer for “HalfnHalf,” D.C.’s newest bi-weekly drag king show, and chief hooligan at BANSHEES, an event series that attracts the city’s rock ‘n’ roll fans. For Molasses, drag is about having fun with masculine identities while providing astute political commentary about them. “[Drag performance] is that swag you get in the shower that nobody sees,” they said in a Vox interview in June.

**Best Transgender Performer: Sophia Carrero**





*Sophia Carrero (Photo courtesy of Carrero)*

Runner-up: Whitney Gucci Goo

A 2016 picture of this Latin American bombshell shows her clad in a figure-hugging, beaded red cut-out dress, with a flower pinned to her blonde curly hair that cascades down her back. In essence, she's all about gilded glamour and jaw-dropping beauty. Carrero captured the hearts of many when she won Miss Gay Maryland America in 1999, the preliminary competition to Miss Gay America. She was also crowned Miss Hippo in 1998.

**Best Drag Show (tie): Desiree Dik's: Oddball AND Freddie's Follies**



*Desiree Dik's 'Oddball.'* (Photo by [@gratuity\\_included](#))

While some drag queens prance around the stage in sky-high stilettos while lip-syncing to popular '80s tunes by Diana Ross and Whitney Houston, **Desiree Dik's Oddball** treated guests to blood, comedy, grossness, queer art, and in their own words "just plain odd fun!" This summer event, hosted by restaurant Slash Run, featured D.C.'s finest performers including Bratworst, Mix N Match and Dvita FauxFemme.





*Freddie's Follies (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

**Freddie's Follies** also provided guests with weekly drag entertainment from D.C.'s top drag queens. After riveting shows of back-breaking dancing and comedy, guests are then welcomed to the center stage to showcase their karaoke-singing skills. For the ultimate drag fan, Freddie's Follies is where one should be on a Saturday.

**Best Museum: Smithsonian American Art Museum**



*Smithsonian American Art Museum. (Photo courtesy SAAM)*

8th and G Streets, N.W.

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

Editor's Choice: National Gallery of Art

Housed in the old Patent Office Building since 1968, the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM) boasts a sprawling permanent collection of American works from the colonial period to today including photography, modern folk and self-taught art, African-American art, Latino art, and video games as well as a changing roster of featured exhibitions.

What's more, SAAM shares the historic building with the equally wonderful National Portrait Gallery. Both museums have access to the Kogod Courtyard, a soaring, covered space where museumgoers can grab lunch from the Courtyard Café or simply work on their laptops. The quiet is occasionally interrupted by welcomed scheduled events and live entertainment.

**Best Theater: GALA Hispanic Theatre**





*Miguel Anggelo performs at GALA Theatre. (Photo by Ryan Muir)*

3333 14th St., N.W.

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

Editor's Choice: Studio Theatre

Helmed by its dynamic co-founders, husband and wife team Hugo Medrano and Rebecca Reed Medrano, GALA Hispanic Theatre has been promoting and sharing Latino arts and cultures with a diverse audience since 1976. Located in the former balcony space of the historic Tivoli Theatre in Columbia Heights, GALA creates work that speaks to communities today drawing from both exciting new works and the classic Spanish canon.

The company also strives to serve the community by providing free education programs for multicultural youth, bringing bilingual theater to children, and making theater in Spanish accessible to thousands of youths from low-income families yearly.

**Best Theater Production: "There's Always the Hudson"**



**Paola Lázaro and Justin Weaks** in *'There's Always the Hudson.'* (Photo by Teresa Castracane; courtesy Woolly Mammoth)

Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company

641 D St., N.W.

[Woollymammoth.net](http://Woollymammoth.net)

Editor's Choice: "Six," National Theatre

In May and June, Woolly Mammoth Theatre presented a compelling production of "There's Always the Hudson," playwright/actor Paola Lázaro's audacious and unapologetically healing new work in which actors didn't cower and audiences were compelled to experience a little discomfort along with the entertainment.

Lázaro and out actor Justin Weaks played best friends Lola and T (short for Toussaint) who met in a sexual abuse survivors support group three years previously. At some point, the pair made a pact that if things failed to improve, they'd kill themselves. When Lola says today's the day to die, they agree to first settle scores with some of those who've hurt them. The night is about them taking New York City by storm and confronting their wounds head-on.

In an interview with the Blade, Weaks wisely commented, "Healing can be messy."

**Best Live Music in DC: 9:30 Club**





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

815 V St., N.W.

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

Runner-Up: The Anthem

Yes, D.C.'s legendary 9:30 club has been selected Best Live Music in D.C. once again.

No surprise there. In recent years it's been named one of the best live music venues in America by Rolling Stone, and dubbed "Venue of the Decade" by the widely read VenuesNow.

Everyone in the area who sees live music has multiple memories of the place. Some of us remember seeing the Waitresses sing in the club's old F Street, N.W. location. (That night what seemed a small invasion of rats scared audience members witless.)

Since opening in 1980, the club has hosted everyone from the Psychedelic Furs to the B52s to Tony Bennett. Originally billed as the "first non-disco niteclub to open in downtown D.C. in thirteen years," a concept that's worked at the club's original location in a then-blighted part of town, and since 1996 at its bigger, arguably better and vermin-free space on V Street.

**Best Live Music Outside-the-District: Wolf Trap**



*Boy George and the Culture Club perform at Wolf Trap. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

1645 Trap Road

Vienna, Va.

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

Editor's Choice: The Fillmore Silver Spring

Set on 117 verdant acres of national park land near Vienna, Va., Wolf Trap's three performance venues offer something for everyone: the cavernous Filene Center hosts the summer music festival; the Barns at Wolf Trap, provide a more intimate year-round experience; and the Children's Theatre in the Woods is ideal for kids in nicer weather.

Wolf Trap's mission is to present and create excellent and innovative performing arts programs for the enrichment, education, and enjoyment of diverse audiences and participants. Wolf Trap reliably provides top-notch musical talent in a gracious setting.

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





*The Gay Men's Chorus of Washington perform 'Unbreakable' at Lincoln Theatre. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

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

Editor's Choice: Impulse Group DC

A veritable D.C. institution, the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington (GMCW) is beloved by its members and audiences alike. The chorus gives members an opportunity to gloriously express a love of music while honing their talents, as well as do good works for the LGBTQ community. It's also a place where longtime friendships and romances are forged.

On Oct. 22, GMCW presents the much-anticipated "Judy," a cabaret celebrating the music of – who else? – Judy Garland. Fourteen select soloists from the Chorus will share stories as they sing their favorite Judy tunes. Songs include "Over the Rainbow," "The Trolley Song," "Come Rain or Come Shine," "The Man That Got Away," and "Happy Days are Here Again."

**Best LGBTQ Event: Pride Run 5K**



*Pride Run 5K (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

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

#### Editor's Choice: Nationals Night Out

Looking for a healthful, fat-free way to kick off the Pride season? Why not try the DC Front Runners Pride Run 5K? Listed as an official event of Pride, the race takes place on Friday of Pride weekend, starting and ending at historic Congressional Cemetery not far from the grave of Air Force tech Sgt. Leonard Matlovich. He's the LGBTQ hero who came out to his commanding officer in the 1970s, and when he was discharged, famously sued for reinstatement. Proceeds from the race help to raise money for worthy LGBTQ causes like SMYAL and the Blade Foundation.

The run is followed by a Finish Line Party, featuring beer for race participants, a live DJ, entertainment, and awards for the race's top performers.

#### **Best Regional Pride: Annapolis Pride**





*Annapolis Pride (Photo by Jaime Thompson/Fleur de Lis Photography)*

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

Editor's Choice: Baltimore Pride

Save the date – the third Annapolis Pride Parade and Festival is slated for June 3, 2023.

With long established Pride events in Baltimore and D.C., you might not think Annapolis needed one of its own. But a small group of LGBTQ folks thought otherwise. They asked, why not bring Pride to Maryland's historic capital so charmingly situated on the Chesapeake?

So, the group of spirited locals moved ahead and Annapolis Pride was founded in the spring of 2018. Initially unsure how their endeavor would be received, the all-volunteer group was thrilled to see the enthusiastic support from the LGBTQ and ally communities, resulting in a well-attended parade down West Street feeding into the People's Park where attendees found camaraderie, vendors, entertainment, fun. And now it's already become a tradition.

## COMMUNITY

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**Most Committed Activist: Rayceen Pendarvis**





*Rayceen Pendarvis (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Runner-up: Preston Mitchum

As a longtime event moderator, emcee, entertainer, and LGBTQ rights advocate, Rayceen Pendarvis became a well-known and admired figure in D.C.'s LGBTQ community as host of "The Ask Rayceen Show," a live monthly variety program that had a 10-year run from 2012 through 2121.

In addition to live music and other performances, segments of the show included panel discussions, interviews on LGBTQ related topics, comedy, and games.

Pendarvis has also served as an elected D.C. Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner and hosted multiple fundraisers, Pride celebrations, arts festivals, talent showcases, fashion shows, and other events, including the Reel Affirmations International LGBTQ Film Festival in D.C.

In June of 2021, the D.C. Council voted unanimously to approve a resolution recognizing Pendarvis' accomplishments as a community leader and advocate for causes that have made D.C. a better city. That same year, Mayor Muriel Bowser issued an official mayoral proclamation declaring Sept. 1 as a day to recognize the contributions of Pendarvis and the long-running "The Ask Rayceen Show."

**Best D.C. Public Official: Mayor Muriel Bowser**



*D.C. Mayor **Muriel Bowser** (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Runner-up: D.C. Council member Robert White

Since serving as a member of the D.C. Council and since the time she won election as mayor in 2014, Muriel Bowser has emerged as one of the strongest supporters of the LGBTQ community among all the city's previous mayors, according to many of her LGBTQ supporters.

With the city having adopted legislation safeguarding LGBTQ people from discrimination before she became mayor, activists have praised Bowser for making sure her administration enforces the anti-discrimination laws and policies to protect LGBTQ people and other minorities.

LGBTQ people have joined others in the city in praising Bowser for her role in leading the city through the COVID pandemic

During more pleasant times, Bowser has appeared at many LGBTQ events during her tenure as mayor, including Pride events. In a development that may have been a first for a D.C. mayor, Bowser arranged for her Office of LGBTQ Affairs to become the lead organizer of one of the city's largest LGBTQ events, the 17<sup>th</sup> Street drag queen High Heel Race that takes place each year in October at Halloween time. The mayor has appeared in person on a stage to give the official signal to start the race, for which several thousand people turn out each year to watch.

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



*Whitman-Walker Health (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

1545 14<sup>th</sup> St., N.W.

Runner-up: Robert McKernan, Big Gay Smiles

Since its founding as the Gay Men's VD Clinic in 1973, Whitman-Walker Health has been providing comprehensive healthcare services for the LGBTQ community in the D.C. area through numerous public health crises, including the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the current COVID-19 and monkeypox pandemics.

A statement on its website explains why members of the LGBTQ community consider Whitman-Walker a highly regarded institution in the community.

"Through multiple locations throughout D.C., we provide stigma-free care to anyone who walks through our doors," the statement says. "We are proud and honored to be a place where the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer communities, as well as those living with or affected by HIV feel supported, welcomed and respected."

In addition to medical services, Whitman-Walker provides dental and behavioral care as well as legal services at its three locations and at a soon to opened new facility at the redeveloping St. Elizabeth's Hospital Campus in Southeast D.C.

**Best House of Worship: Metropolitan Community Church of Washington, D.C.**





*Metropolitan Community Church of Washington, D.C. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

474 Ridge St., N.W.

Editor's Choice: Foundry United Methodist Church

The Metropolitan Community Church of Washington, D.C., known as MCC-DC, was founded in 1970 and officially chartered the following year by the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, a national federation of LGBTQ supportive Christian churches founded by the Rev. Troy Perry of Los Angeles.

MCC-DC grew steadily in its first decade and continued to grow in the 1980s as it responded to the AIDS epidemic. It partnered with the then Whitman-Walker Clinic, the National Institutes of Health, MCC Baltimore, and Georgetown University Hospital to host one of the first AIDS forums in the nation in 1982.

The forum was held at the First Congregational Church in downtown D.C., where MCC-DC held its worship services for nine years before it purchased its first ministry center at 415 M St., N.W. and a short time later built its current church and ministry center at 474 Ridge St., N.W., which opened its doors in December 1992.

In addition to its many diverse ministries, Bible study classes, and its highly regarded church choir, MCC-DC has opened its new church to LGBTQ supportive events, including forums where candidates running for local public office have appeared before packed audiences.

**Best Local Day Trip: Easton**



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

#### Editor's Choice: Annapolis

If you've driven past Easton 1,000 times on your way to Rehoboth or other spots on Delmarva and never stopped, then you're missing out. Next time you need a convenient getaway close to D.C., plan a trip to Easton, Md., with its quaint B&Bs, shops, galleries, and a plethora of high-end restaurants. Stay at the gay-owned Hummingbird Inn (14 N. Aurora St.) with its sumptuous breakfast feast. Shop for unique, hard-to-find books at Vintage Books & Fine Art (4 N. Washington St., [vintagebooksmd.com](http://vintagebooksmd.com)); artwork at Studio B Art Gallery ([studiobartgallery.com](http://studiobartgallery.com)); or clothing at Marc Randall boutique (3 E. Dover St., [marc-randall.com](http://marc-randall.com)). Dining options are plentiful; among the best are Scossa (8 N. Washington St.), owned by Chef Giancarlo Tondin who was born in Italy and began his career at Harry's Bar in Venice; Out of the Fire (22 Goldsborough St.), a farm-to-table bistro; and The Wardroom (108 N. Washington St., [thewardroom.com](http://thewardroom.com)).

#### Best Hotel: Eaton DC





*Wild Days at Eaton DC (Photo courtesy of Eaton)*

1201 K St., N.W.

[Eatonworkshop.com](https://eatonworkshop.com)

Editor's Choice: The Line D.C.

Eaton DC is more than a place to sleep on K Street. The boutique hotel that fancies itself a cultural hub has proven to be just that.

Eaton DC, Eaton Workshop's flagship hotel in downtown D.C., offers onsite wellness treatments like yoga and meditation gatherings, as well as a multi-instrumental sound bath experience every Thursday night. The hotel is also currently hosting "The Gender Within," an exploration of gender identity and orientation featuring works by 20+ local LGBTQ+ artists and co-curated by the Blade and Dupont Underground.

With its black brick edifice with a mid-century inspired interior, Eaton DC offers a cool look to accompany its innovative concept, which it describes as providing a place "for kindred spirits, locals, and travelers alike, to convene, collaborate, and create. Hospitality is a means for community, creativity, and culture."

**Best Local Businessperson: Bryan Van Den Oever**





*Bryan Van Den Oever (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

Red Bear Brewing Co.

209 M St., N.E.

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

Runner-up: Ed Bailey, Trade & Number Nine

In February, Bryan Van Den Oever told the Blade that the pandemic hit the service industry hard but that “the brewery is my dream.” A Seattle native, Van Den Oever opened Red Bear in 2019 with two friends, Simon Bee and Cameron Raspet. The trio told the Blade at the time that they wanted to turn D.C.’s LGBTQ community onto beer, offering creative flavors and a playful environment.

“The gays are not exclusively about spirits,” Van Den Oever says. “In fact, I think they aren’t exclusive to anything.”

Red Bear and its owners are host to dozens of events each month, including trivia, comedy, and drag events. The show offerings include the wildly popular “Slay Them Drag Competition” hosted once a month from August to January with a grand prize of \$500.

Throughout the pandemic, Van Den Oever said the brewery continued to host virtual events to support the city’s queer performers.

“We’re so grateful for the love and solidarity,” he said of the community support during the pandemic.

**Best Clergy (tie): Fr. Thomas Wieczorek and Rev. Ashley Goff**



*From left, Fr. **Thomas Wieczorek** and Rev. **Ashley Goff** (Photos courtesy of the subjects)*

[stmarysnccna.com/our-clergy](http://stmarysnccna.com/our-clergy)

[ashley-goff.com/](http://ashley-goff.com/)

Father Thomas Wieczorek moved to D.C. from Ionia, Mich., in 2005 and has since held positions including newspaper reporter, police officer, fire chief, director of public safety, and city manager. He is now an owner and partner of a consulting firm that assists cities and counties with public safety issues. In addition to serving as a clergymember at St. Mary's National Catholic Church, Wieczorek has also been a vice chairperson of Capital Pride and established the Barry Smythers Fund in memory of his partner who died in 2016. The fund targets suicide prevention and mental health issues.

Reverend Ashley Goff is the pastor at the Arlington Presbyterian Church. According to her website, she graduated from Union Theological Seminary in New York City where she developed her passion for liturgy. Goff is also a liturgy writer, penning multiple pieces to direct religious services.

"I write to hear myself. I write to build my own resiliency and witness to the Ways of God. I write to keep my voice from being reluctant to social change," Goff wrote on her website.

**Best Local Professional Sports Team: Washington Mystics**



*Washington Mystics (Photo courtesy of the Mystics)*

1100 Oak Drive, S.E.

[mystics.wnba.com/](https://mystics.wnba.com/)

Editor's Choice: Washington Nationals

The Washington Mystics is D.C.'s women's basketball team and it competes in the Women's National Basketball Association as a member club of the league's eastern conference. Led by general manager and head coach Mike Thibault, assistant general manager Maria Giovannetti and associate coach Eric Thibault, this team shows that D.C.'s women's basketball teams are strong national contenders within the sport. The team is currently third in the conference with 22 wins and 14 losses.

The team recently announced a string of LGBTQ history month events and partnerships with The Rainbow History Project and As You Are Bar.

**Best Amateur Sports League: DC Gay Flag Football**





*D.C. Gay Flag Football League (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

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

#### Editor's Choice: Stonewall Kickball

The DC Gay Flag Football League began in the mid-90s and then grew over the years to its current lineup of 20 teams with approximately 270 players from around the region. The league hosts a summer tournament each year in Rehoboth Beach and also funds five travel teams to compete in tournaments around the country. Earlier this year, the league sent teams to the national Pride Bowl in Chicago where one team—the DC Commanders—went on to win their championship game against the Austin Capitals.

Nikki Kasperek founded the league's first women's travel team, the DC Senators, in 2014 and told the Blade she is very excited about the growth of the league.

"I am incredibly competitive and the DCGFFL leagues and travel tournaments allow me to scratch that itch," Kasperek says. "I am going to enjoy all of it – the friendships, the seasons, the tournaments, the moments – until I can't flex that muscle anymore."

#### Best Real Estate Agent: Justin Noble



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



TTR Sotheby's

1515 14th St., N.W.

[ttrsir.com/eng](https://ttrsir.com/eng)

Runner-up: Stacey Williams-Zeiger, Zeiger Realty

Justin Noble is a real estate agent with TTR Sotheby's and has nearly a decade of experience in the field. According to the company's website, Noble was born into a real estate centric family and spent much of his childhood reading architecture and design magazines. Noble has also been a contributor to the Blade for the past year, writing real estate columns such as "Alternative ways to deal with high interest rates" and "Tips for preparing your home for fall."

"If you have read my previous columns (I hope you have) then you will know I am a huge fan of sass and more importantly, controlling your controllables!" Noble wrote in one column.

**Best Real Estate Group: Jenn Smira Team, Compass**



*Jenn Smira Team (Photo courtesy Smira Team)*

1313 14th St., N.W.

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

Runner-up: Asgari Moore Group, Compass

The Jenn Smira team is a Compass real estate team offering a full suite of services, including marketing, staging, negotiations, and listings management. The team is composed of 17 Realtors and three supporting staff members. Jenn Smira—founder of the team—was previously on the board of DC Women In Solidarity for Empowerment, a nonprofit that raises money for local organizations serving women and children.



The group also gives back to the D.C. community through direct contributions to local elementary schools and nonprofit organizations focused on assisting homeless individuals. In 2021, one of the group's Realtors Elvin Merlo raised more than \$70,000 for cancer research through Haymakers for Hope.

**Best Lawyer: Lawrence Jacobs**



*Lawrence Jacobs (Photo courtesy of Jacobs)*

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

Runner-Up: Amy Nelson

Lawrence Jacobs is with McMillan Metro, P.C. and practices in multiple areas, including estate planning for same-sex couples.

"I've been the trusted adviser to more than 800 same-sex couples looking to protect their partners or spouses and their families with documents such as wills, trusts, powers of attorney, partnership agreements and pre-nuptial agreements," he says in a statement on his site.

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



*VIDA Fitness (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)*

1517 15th St., N.W.

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

Editor's Choice: Barry's Bootcamp

This is VIDA's fourth consecutive win in this category and 11th win in the category overall. The company has six locations U Street (1612 U St., N.W.), Logan Circle (1517 15th St., N.W.), The Yards (1212 4th St. S.E. #170), Ballston (4040 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Va.), Gallery Place (601 F St., N.W.) and City Vista (445 K St., N.W.). The chain is gay-owned by David Von Storch and the locations frequently hold LGBTQ-centered events, such as the Pride Pool Party.

Membership packages run between \$119-179 per month and include access to all locations, virtual classes, indoor and outdoor classes, discounts at Aura Spa and Bang Salon and more.

**Best Alternative Transportation: Alto**





*Alto (Photo courtesy of Alto)*

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

Runner-Up: Capital Bikeshare

Billed as the world's first employee driver rideshare, Alto offers an elevated experience with luxury vehicles, professional drivers, and music controlled by the passenger.

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





*District Dogs (Photo courtesy District Dogs)*

2323 Sherman Ave., N.W.

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

Editor's Choice: City Dogs

District Dogs started as a dog walking business in 2014 by owner Jacob Hensley and has since grown into one of the best pet care businesses in the district with four full-care facilities and one training facility. Another facility at National Landing in Virginia will open in 2023 in Amazon's HQ2 development. District Dogs offers daycare, overnight boarding, grooming, and training classes.

The company also hosts a number of community events such as bootcamps, pride parties and happy hours.

**Best Salon/Spa: Logan 14**



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

1314 14th St., N.W.

[Logan14salonspa.com](http://Logan14salonspa.com)

Editor's Choice: The Burrow

This is Aveda's seventh consecutive win in this category and according to the company, about 75 percent of their clientele are LGBTQ.

The salon offers cuts, coloring, extensions, hair styling, and an array of spa options including massages, botox, and laser hair removal.

General Manager Katie Rose told the Blade last year that the salon has almost fully bounced back from the pandemic but that COVID-19 has forever changed the business.

"We service our guests and make people look and feel better about themselves," she said.

**Best Adult Store: Bite the Fruit**





1723 Connecticut Ave., N.W. (second floor)

Runner-Up: Lotus Blooms

**Best Car Dealership: BMW of Fairfax**



Washington Blade | Michael Key

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

8427 Lee Highway

Fairfax, Va.

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

Runner-Up: DARCARS

Best Local Website/Blog: District Fray Magazine





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

Editor's Choice: DCist

District Fray is a monthly print and digital magazine that describes itself as “a vibrant source of lifestyle and entertainment news to Washingtonians.”

“The magazine has translated media, social sports, and events to make DC Fray’s ‘Make Fun Possible’ mantra into a tangible ethos that locals can rely on to stay in the know about what to do in and around the city through the lens of inclusive, eclectic and objective content,” District Fray says on its website. ‘District Fray Magazine’s’ elevated editorial allows readers to experience the city through the voices of its talented writers and local interviewees.”

“Our goal is to highlight the voices in the District who are keeping their fingers on the pulse and champion the diverse communities who make our city vibrant and unique,” said District Fray Editor-in-Chief Monica Alford. “We are proud to support D.C.’s LGBTQ+ community through the lens of inclusive, eclectic and objective content.”

District Media is on social media at @districtfray.

**Best Local TV/Radio Personality: Evan Koslof, WUSA9**



***Evan Koslof** (Photo by Laura Metzler)*

Runner-up: Chuck Bell, NBC4

Evan Koslof has been a reporter with WUSA 9 since 2016.



His bio notes an interview with a 10-year-old nonbinary child from Bowie, Md., and the Nationals 2019 World Series victory are among the many stories he has covered. Koslof, who has won six Emmy Awards, also notes he met his husband, Realtor Justin Noble, at the beach in Delaware in 2015.

“Being a reporter in the nation’s capital is a dream come true,” Koslof said. “As a reporter, I’ve covered elections, inaugurations and even insurrections. I’ve gone live from dozens of protests and rallies. I’ve traveled to hurricanes and mass shootings, and I’ve met people at their lowest and their highest.”

“And the older I get, the more I’ve come to learn that the ‘best’ reporters are those who share their authentic selves,” added Koslof. “I’m a proud gay man, who’s been married to my best friend since 2019 (Justin Noble — Best Realtor.) I hope that my openness can inspire future generations to be their true selves as well.”

### **Best Tattoo Parlor: Dapper Dog Tattoo**



*Dapper Dog Tattoo (Photo courtesy Dapper Dog Tattoo)*

75 Maryland Ave.

Annapolis, Md.

Editor’s Choice: Tattoo Paradise

### **Best Non-Profit powered by PEPCO: Capital Pride**



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

Editor's Choice: SMYAL

The Capital Pride Alliance offers a variety of programs and events that celebrate the LGBTQ community in the DMV throughout the year. The 'reUNITED' Capital Pride Parade brought hundreds of thousands of people to the streets of D.C. for the first time in two years.

"We thank the community for its long-term support, especially over the last few years as we had to navigate the constraints imposed by the pandemic," said the Capital Pride Alliance. "Being unable to hold large gatherings for two years was a challenge that required us to create new and unique ways to provide platforms to highlight the community's visibility until we were able to bring back a full-scale Pride celebration this past June. We appreciate everyone's willingness to reUnite to show that we still have Pride."

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





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

1626 14th St., N.W.

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

Editor's Choice: Hamilton's Sofa Gallery

This 14th Street institution once again makes this year's list.

**Best Private School: Barrie School**



*(Photo courtesy of Barrie School)*

13500 Layhill Rd.

Silver Spring, Md.

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

Editor's Choice: Maret School

## **REHOBOTH BEACH**

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**Best Rehoboth Drag Queen: Magnolia Applebottom**





**Magnolia Applebottom** (Washington Blade photo by Michael K. Lavers)

Runner-Up: Kristina Kelly

Magnolia Applebottom is a repeat winner in this category and it's easy to understand why: She's simply everywhere, from Rehoboth to Milton to Salisbury performing for packed crowds at happy hours, Pride events, and charity functions. In addition to her towering stature, entertaining standup, and fabulous fashion sense, Magnolia sings live. No visit to Rehoboth is complete without a stop at her show at Diego's.

**Best Rehoboth Outdoor Dining: Purple Parrot**





Washington Blade | Michael Key

Purple Parrot (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)



134 Rehoboth Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.

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

Editor's Choice: Aqua

Rehoboth suffers from a relative dearth of outdoor dining spots, something the locals have complained about for years. One bright spot remains the Purple Parrot Biergarten on Wilmington Avenue (you can also access it from the main entrance to the Parrot on Rehoboth Avenue). The food is consistently good with regular specials like prime rib nights and German-themed dinners. But the best part of eating here is arguably the festive atmosphere complete with upbeat music, the friendliest bartenders in town, and a lush, green roof over the bar. Say hi to Chandler, who has been voted Best Rehoboth Bartender multiple times, and to the current titleholder, first-time winner Georgiy Yanchenko.

**Best Rehoboth Bartender: Georgiy Yanchenko, Purple Parrot**



**Georgiy Yanchenko** (Photo courtesy of Yanchenko)

134 Rehoboth Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.

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



Runner-Up: Evelyn Orta “Fluffy,” Freddie’s

Everyone in town knows Georgiy, the friendly, outgoing face behind the bar at the Purple Parrot Biergarten. He’s a first-time nominee and winner in this category. No matter how crazy busy the bar gets on a summer holiday weekend, Georgiy handles it all with a smile and skilled service. This is one of the most competitive categories, so hats off to Georgiy as this is not an easy award to win.

**Best Rehoboth-Area Live Show: Drag Brunch at the Pines**



*(Washington Blade photo by Daniel Truitt)*

56 Baltimore Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.

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



Editor's Choice: Magnolia Applebottom at Diego's

Local legends Mona Lotts and Kristina Kelly headline the uproarious drag brunch at the Pines on Sundays from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. As the website warns: "Mature comedy not for the faint at heart." Bear that in mind as things get rather racy early in the day. Tickets are \$15 and there's a delicious brunch buffet offered at \$25.

### Best Rehoboth Coffeeshop: The Coffee Mill



*The Coffee Mill (Photo courtesy of the Coffee Mill)*

127 Rehoboth Ave B

Rehoboth Beach, Del.



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

Editor's Choice: Rise Up

The gay-owned Coffee Mill is a go-to spot for many Rehoboth locals, offering a staggering array of freshly ground coffees along with pastries and other breakfast treats. The outdoor patio becomes quite the scene in summer and don't forget to check out owner Mel's photography on display inside.

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



Washington Blade | Daniel Truitt

*Blue Moon (Washington Blade photo by Daniel Truitt)*

35 Baltimore Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.

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

Editor's Choice: The Pines

The venerable Blue Moon may not be the crowded bar of old, but it lives on with a top-notch fine dining restaurant on one side of the building and a cabaret/event space on the other that features rotating performers. The restaurant has won this award so many times that we've lost count. It's a cozy spot, perfect for a romantic dinner, fun night out with friends, or Sunday brunch. The beloved Tasting Tuesday offers a prix fixe menu featuring three courses each with wine for just \$45.

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



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

16698 Kings Hwy A.

Lewes, Del.

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

Runner-Up: Chris Beagle

This is Lee Ann Wilkinson's fifth consecutive win in this category. The Lee Ann Wilkinson Group has ranked #1 in real estate sales in Sussex County, Del., for more than 20 years. She even finds time to contribute insights on the local market to the Blade.

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





***Joe and Darryl Ciarlante-Zuber at Diego's. (Washington Blade photo by Daniel Truitt)***

37298 Rehoboth Ave.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.

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

Editor's Choice: Freddie's Beach Bar

Joe Ciarlante-Zuber and his husband and business partner Darryl Ciarlante-Zuber continue to draw crowds for their exuberant happy hour specials, drag entertainment, and late night dance parties. The venue has a long history of hosting Rehoboth's only real dance parties and it's gratifying to see the tradition continue post-pandemic. This is Diego's second consecutive win in this category.



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.



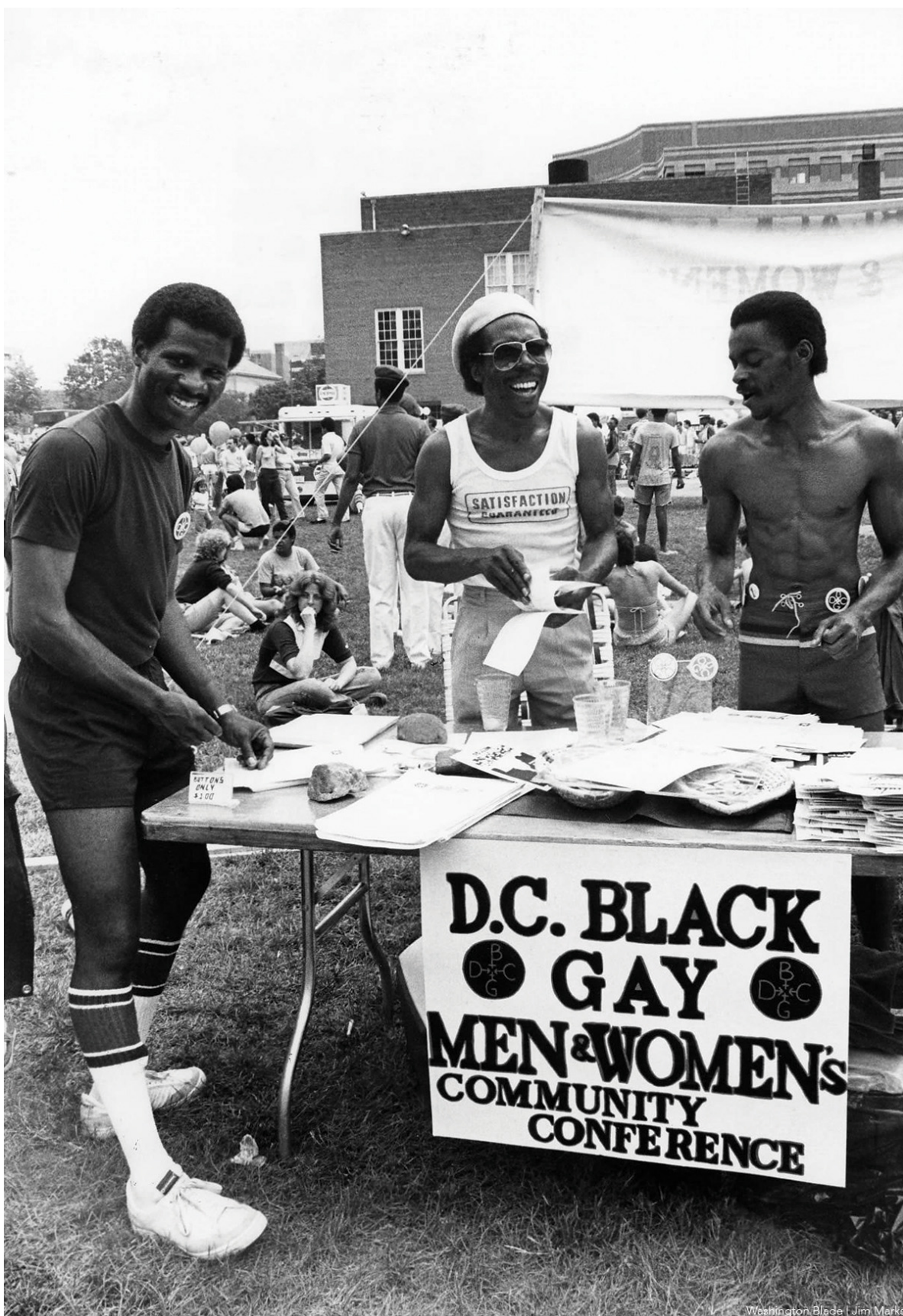
*The 1995 Lesbian and Gay Freedom Festival was held on Freedom Plaza on June 18.  
(Washington Blade archive photo by Clint Steib)*

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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