

Knox Pride

HOMECOMING

2022 ePridebook: Making new steps in Knoxville.

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In loving memory of
Champale Denise (left) and Gene Nutter (right).

Foreword. Forward.

A letter from the CEO.

One year ago, we were preparing to open the Pride Center. Our family of friends and volunteers worked for months to be ready. Collectively, all of us felt that the Knox Pride Community and Resource Center was sorely needed. We anticipated need, that's what we do best, but we were not prepared for the response. It was overwhelming and sobering in the best way possible.

My husband, Dustin, decided to not go back to his corporate job and stayed with the center on a volunteer basis to guarantee success for our community. At the beginning of the 2022, armed with a clear understanding of the full scope of work we needed to accomplish, we decided to work towards the goal of me being able to leave my corporate job in order to lead the center full time.

First, our family needed to make some big sacrifices. We sold our home in order to downsize and move closer to the center. This enabled us to devote ourselves to Knox Pride and on June 3, 2022, I became the CEO of East Tennessee Equality Council and the Executive Director of Pride. On paper, it might seem reckless to forgo financial security, but we have never looked back. It has taken many volunteers and a lot of planning, but I'm so glad we took this chance. Knox Pride is growing stronger and I believe folks see how we are trying to make real change in our community.

Our community is growing, uniting, and taking care of each other.

We took a chance and it is already paying off. My hope is that our risks and sacrifices will benefit folks in Knoxville many years to come. We want our community to reap these efforts for generations to come, and we wish to continue to empower those who have often felt a lack of autonomy to live their most authentic life.

Many thanks from John.

As we kick off Pride Fest 2022, I would like to thank some folks who work endlessly behind the scenes:

- To my Knox Pride colleagues — thank you all for the support, clarity, and guidance through this crazy endeavor.
- To our core volunteers — thank you for the tireless nights, unseen work, sweat, tears, and heart. You've held me up and listened to me at my lowest. Every day your infectious spirits, enthusiastic attitudes, and smiling faces remind me why we do what we do.
- My mom — you are the reason I have the want to be better, do better, and leave the world better.
- Joslynn and our South Press family — we watched you start your business during a pandemic and thrive. I've watched you give away as much as you make and make sure strangers or friends know their worth and that they belong. You help others to feel safe and visible. Your tenacity to rise above when times get tough is an inspiration to us all. Your kinship is cherished and appreciated.
- Keri and Kerri — You both put up with more than most and always remind me of the goal, the heart, and how I can do better. You both remind me of my purpose and passion while reminding me of the journey that has been, as well as what is yet to come. Thank you for keeping me in line ... always.
- Dustin, Matty, and our kids — I love you all more than I could ever express. You all have sacrificed so much time, money, comfort to make sure that we help people every day. You remind me that what's important in life is family and community. I love the life that we have built. Our blended family may not make sense to everyone, but we have a shared hope for our community and together we will always make it happen.

At the end of the day, our community needs to take care of each other and stick together. That's what we are working on at the Pride Center and I hope if you ever need help or a place to start, you will come find us and know we will be here for you.

Happy Pride Fest 2022.

We have worked hard to be inclusive and understanding of all of our community members and we hope that you see that represented this weekend. Have a great pride experience and remember, we are queer 365 days a year and we will be right here, fighting alongside you for a better tomorrow.

With love,



John Camp, Knox Pride CEO

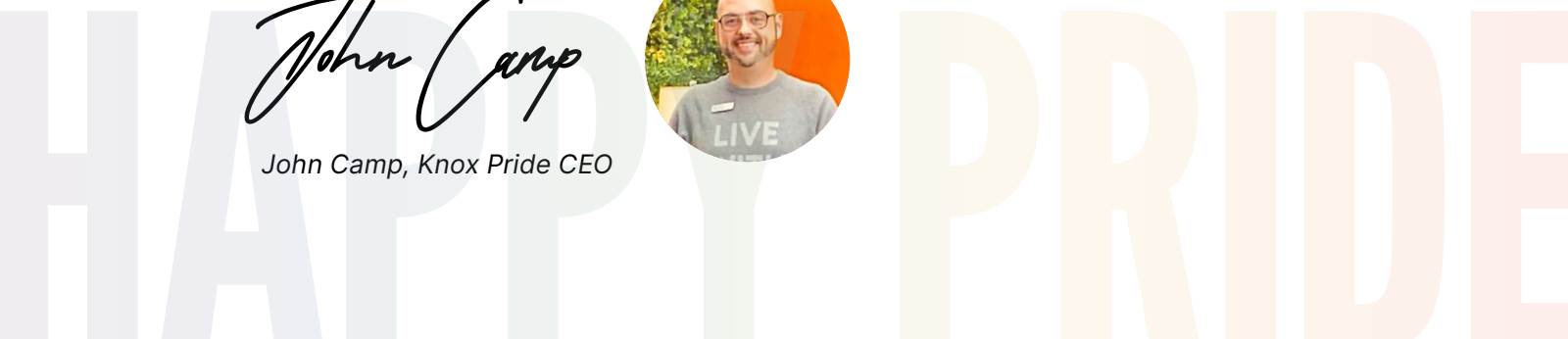


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LET'S GET POLITICAL!

Written by J. Nathan Higdon

The United States is built upon the foundation of a representative democracy. This means that our government is elected by citizens and vote for our government officials. These officials represent our ideas and concerns in government — local, state, and federal. Without full participation of eligible voters, we end up with ideas and concerns that don't represent the views of the majority of folks enacted as regulations and laws.

Tennessee has a problematically low voter turnout, which is even worse for midterm local and state elections. This crisis of turnout impacts individuals in ways that are entirely preventable. When issues of women's healthcare and LGBTQ+ "Slates of Hate" come forward in Nashville, we voters hold the power to remove and replace legislators from our own neighborhood or community who do not represent us.

Becoming politically engaged is paramount for members and allies of the LGBTQ+ community because we voters hold the power to stop harmful and spiteful legislation, but that power requires participation. In November of this year, voters in Tennessee have the power to replace state-level elected officials who actively harm our community through hate and spread of disinformation, but this requires that we inform ourselves about the candidates on the ballot and SHOW UP TO VOTE.

As voters within a large community, we hold the power to stop anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-women's rights legislation, and the bills that start in committees before they become law.

*You must register to vote by **October 11, 2022** at govotetn.gov and vote during Early Voting or on Election Day to take a stand in placing voices into all levels of government who impact our daily life. As you research the candidates on your ballot, which can be done on the GoVoteTN app, you can reach out to candidates via their website or social media, and ask them where they stand on the issues that are important to you.*

We can make a difference, but the change starts with you.



J. Nathan Higdon is TN State Executive Committeeman 2nd Senatorial District as well as CFO for the East Tennessee Equality Council (Knox Pride).



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RAINBOW TEEN SOCIAL CLUB

Written by Traci Sisson



In April 2022, John Camp asked me if I would be interested in hanging out with the Rainbow Teen Club every other Friday at the Knox Pride Center. I was already regularly involved, and I had heard such wonderful things about the Rainbow Teens. It was an easy decision, as I quickly found myself in the vocational suite the following week introducing myself to an incredible group of young adults.

The Rainbow Teen Club started meeting a little over a year ago at South Press. Kay, the founder, saw a need for a safe space for preteens and teens to feel welcomed by their peers. She shared that she “started [the group] so that queer teens could have a place to come to where they can feel loved, supported, and get to know people who are just like them.”

Kay has been stunned by the response the group has received from other states, but even more so by the response from those involved. She shared, “countless parents have come to tell me how much happier their kids are now that they are with the group. I have even had teens come to me and tell me how thankful they are for the group and how much of an impact it’s had on them. I truly cannot put it into words how much of a blessing it is to have been able to be the creator of something that started out as just a little dream, and had now impacted the lives of queer youth all around the state.”

The group quickly learned how much of a need there really was for youths ages 12–15 as the group outgrew their original meeting place, so the Rainbow Teens moved down the street to the Pride center soon after. The move gave a space for the teens to connect on their own, while the parents had their own space to connect, as well. Since the group was founded, friendships have been made, support has been given, and they are still finding new ways to learn and grow together. Every other week, the group has an opportunity to be social, talk about their experiences as queer teens, and be their authentic selves. This time also allows the parents to lean on each other for guidance and fellowship. Shared experiences are so important, especially in the LGBTQIA+ community, and it astounds me that this group has managed to provide that for themselves and others.

When I first met the group, I was struck by their openness. Their arms wide open, ready to welcome newcomers. Their minds open to new perspectives and learning opportunities. Their hearts open to how the group continues to evolve. The teens built a foundation, and since the group was growing, the parents and Knox Pride saw a need for more structure.

My time spent with the teens is to provide that structure and to be a safe person in the room while the parents have their time in the collaboration suite. Sometimes we do activities, but most meetings, their time i their own. If the group wants to play a game all together, they make it happen. If everyone just wants to sit around exchanging memes and dad jokes, they make that happen. Every other Friday looks a little different from the last, but as the teens grow and change, so does the group. Most weeks there is someone new that joins. Not everyone comes to every meeting, but the door is open for those who want the experience and to help ensure the safe space that has already been established. I am honored to be a small part of it.

The Rainbow Teens Club is an excellent reminder as to why Knox Pride does what it does. Our teens are our greatest asset. They are smart, inclusive, and believe in their authentic selves and the authenticity of others. Too often, younger generations are written off as too wild or too spoiled, but imagine if no young person ever decided to invite their peers and their parents to a queer friendly coffee shop because they wanted a deeper connection with others? Who wants a world where change like that never happens? I sure don't!

Traci Sisson is a volunteer with Knox Pride who oversees several of the youth based activities.

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HEADLINING ARTIST

JEANINE FULLER

A seasoned, versatile vocalist, songwriter and performer that delivers engaging and soulful performances. Jeanine is a Brooklyn, New Yorker turned Knoxville, Tennessean, with eclectic vocal blends of soul, funk, blues, jazz and rock. She has toured around the U.S. and internationally and performed in many performance facets from cover bands, off-Broadway, NY, NJ and NC theater based productions, classical, jazz and gospel ensembles to cabaret acts in NY and studio session work.

Jeanine has had the honor of sharing the stage with renowned celebrities and artists, including with her jazz idol, 5x Grammy winning jazz artist, Dianne Reeves, Chaka Khan to most recent Grammy winning artists, Son Little and Brian Blade. Some recent credits include: In 2022, performed with The Wes Bailey Trio (also of the famed rock band, Moon Taxi), Grammy award winning jazz

drummer/artist, Brian Blade at the 2022 Big Ears Festival, Opening performer for Grammy winning artist, Son Little, featured artist for 2019 The Women in Jazz Jam Festival, headline opener for legendary rock band, Loverboy at the 2019 Secret City Festival, headline closer for The Louie Bluie Festival and the 2018 headline opener for Knox Pride fest (then known as Jeanine Fuller and The Boyz).

Jeanine leads several local music projects from duo acts, to jazz/blues ensembles and in 2019, founded the Soul and Funk Tribute band, Jeanine Fuller and The True Funk Souldiers.

Jeanine Fuller and The True Funk Souldiers are quickly rising in demand, performing for local, regional events, festivals and premier music venues.



HEADLINING ARTIST

BIG DIPPER

A Los Angeles-based recording artist known for his infectiously fun music and thiccboy confidence. His sex positive message and exciting live shows have made him the go-to bear of raunchy internet rap. Big Dipper has an extensive catalog of viral music videos and songs, including his 2018 earworm "Lookin" and his 2017 ode to sparkling water "LaCroix Boi". Plus countless bops on his 2018 album release "Late Bloomer". Known for his creative video concepts, you can find him portraying a ravenous boy scout in "Meat Quotient" an oversized banana in "Chunkita" a mermaid in "Vibin" and much more on his youtube channel. Noisey called Big Dipper's life "an ongoing party full of...cute outfits, fierce rhymes, eating candy behind DJ booths, and a ton of hard work."

A perfect description for the rapper, who delivers an impressive stage show that features choreographed dance routines, costume changes, and twisted song covers. Big Dipper's live show has been performed all over the United States, Canada, Australia, Iceland, France, Amsterdam, and Sweden. Big Dipper's music can be streamed on all digital platforms, and he can also be heard co-hosting his podcast "Sloppy Seconds."

Big Dipper has been featured in Details Magazine, Huffington Post, Next Magazine, Pitchfork, Out, Rolling Stone, A.V. Club, NPR, Paper, and Red Eye Chicago; notto mention a youtube series with WOW presents, his poppin Instagram feed, and as a host for Streets by Vice.



HEADLINING ARTIST

JADA STAR & BARRY J.

Accompanying Chris Hamblin on stage.

Singer-Songwriter duo Jada Star and Barry J. released their debut CD project, *Long Way Home*, in October of 2018. Their songwriting skills mesh incredibly well together to bring about a charming yet unique perspective on everyday life. With upbeat Indie Rock tunes like *Beautiful Disaster* and *I Am Woman*, as well as more exciting tunes like *Welcome to the Weekend* and *I Like It That Way*, they create a wonderful mix of emotions through their music. There truly is something for everyone with these two.

A close-up portrait of Chris Hamblin, a man with short brown hair and a goatee, wearing a shiny, metallic blue jacket over a black shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a solid teal color.

HEADLINING ARTIST

CHRIS HAMBLIN

A native of Tennessee, a former New Yorker, and a man of many incarnations, Christopher Hamblin is thrilled to be returning home to celebrate pride with his hometown crew. Before leaving Tennessee to be with his now husband, best known as Latrice Royale, Christopher was known locally as the Founding Artistic Director of Knoxville Gay Men's Chorus and served multiple East Tennessee congregations as Minister of Music and/or Accompanist. Since 2015, Christopher has toured internationally with his husband, sometimes as an assistant, but often as accompanist for Latrice's autobiographical cabaret show "Here's to Life" which has played to sold out audiences around the world.

Christopher is also the proud host of "All the Queens' Men," a virtual chat show featuring romantic partners of contestants from RuPaul's Drag Race, produced by World of Wonder and available on YouTube and WOWPresentsPlus. He has also served as accompanist to Drag Race royalty such as Kennedy Davenport, Mrs. Kasha Davis, Cynthia Lee Fontaine, and Michelle Visage. His bluegrass single "Give Me a Holler" is a tribute to his country upbringing, as well as a throwback to his days spent creating and performing in his Dolly Parton tribute night, "The Night of 1,000 Dollies." He is thrilled to finally get the opportunity to perform this original song live with Jada Star and Barry J., who also appear on the single and in the video.

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HEADLINING ARTIST

AJA

As a non-binary queer artist and performer, AJA (they/them) is bringing the art of drag into the masc-dominated world of hip-hop. With their critically-acclaimed debut EP, *In My Feelings* (May 2018) and breakout on *RuPaul's Drag Race* and *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars 3*, Aja has performed epic live shows around the world, dedicated to uplifting their fans and empowering them to be in control of their own destiny. Aja's streetwear fashion, their inspiring perspective, brilliant songwriting and outspoken activism continues to propel their stardom to new heights. Born and raised in the heart of Brooklyn, Aja's genuine connection with their fans and their personal struggles with race, gender identity, class, and sexuality, has become largely impactful to the LGBTQ+ community. Aja has now become an international role-model for people of all backgrounds.

In 2018, Aja performed over 175 live shows, selling out venues in the U.S., Brazil, Canada, Spain, Australia, and the UK. Their following continues to grow with nearly 1 million Instagram followers, 6.5 million spins on Spotify, a combined 3.8 million views on their YouTube channel (since their first music video release in March), and Aja consistently sparks Reddit conversations for their LGBTQ advocacy on Twitter. In June 2018, AJA took part in HandM's first-ever pride-themed campaign, alongside Kim Petras, Gus Kenworthy and Shaun Ross, making history for their brand.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

09/30 NIGHT PARADE, 7PM, GAY ST

10/01 FESTIVAL, 12PM – 8PM, WORLD’S FAIR PARK

	AMPITHEATER	FRINGE ARTS PERFORMANCE LAWN
12:30	Intro/Welcome	The Shandies
1:00	Gay Men's Chorus	
1:30	Chris Hamblin w/ Jada Star & Barry J.	
2:00	STUNNING Drag Showcase	Drag Comedy Magic Show
2:30		Alicia Harvey
3:00	Big Dipper	
3:30	Headliner Meet & Greet	
4:00	SICKENING Drag Showcase	FIERCE Drag Showcase
4:30		
5:00	Aja	French Toast
5:30	SNATCHED Drag Showcase	
6:00		Knox Comedy
6:30	Lady D. & Soul Jam	
7:00		
7:30	Jeanine Fuller & True Funk Soilders	
8:00	Silent Disco	

10/02 SHOPPING, 12PM – 4PM, WORLD’S FAIR PARK

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What is RISE?

RISE is a research study being conducted by Emory University, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. RISE includes a registry created to help ensure the LGBTQIA+ community is represented in Alzheimer's research.

What is the RISE Registry?

The RISE registry is a national effort designed to connect participants to LGBTQIA+ friendly resources and opportunities in research.

Who is the RISE Registry for?

- The registry is for LGBTQIA+ people 18 and older who:
- have memory concerns or a memory loss diagnosis
 - are helping care for someone with memory loss

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CELEBRATING OUR FIRST YEAR AT THE PRIDE CENTER.

Written by Rebekah Wallace

It seemed like a good idea.

Creating a community space that would be dedicated to LGBTQIA+ needs year round, a sober space to become a resource for various activities and information, opening our doors to carry the spirit of pride into our community every day. It seemed like a good idea. It wasn't.

Allow me to explain. Opening the Pride Center was a good idea – a great idea, but it was so much more than that. When the Pride Center first opened it's doors one year ago, nobody could have prepared for what would transpire. Immediately, it became clear that our community had needs that were not being met with many organizations reaching out to see what services were offered at the center. That was an excellent question. With more of these needs starting to become defined, what services could the Pride Center offer?



Soon after opening their doors, the Pride Center began to work closely with other non-profits in the area such as Choice Health Network, Youth Wins, and Bryant's Bridge.

The Pride Center was lucky to find such welcoming organizations to help them grow and learn but they started to notice a trend. Living in a more conservative area of the country can come with high risks and many consequences. It was startling to realize the sobering number of displaced LGBTQIA+



youth living in our area. Knoxville, we have a problem.

The Pride Center took action. They started a food pantry and began offering life skills classes that covered basic car maintenance, resume writing, sewing, and cooking classes. The center was able to provide bus passes on behalf of the City of Knoxville for many of these youths which helped them to stay mobile, working, and become a fully realized members of their community.

What soon followed was the first of many Affirmation Days. A quarterly event, Affirmation Day is a resource day for those who are exploring or seeking to affirm their gender. Thanks to a vast network of volunteers, Knox Pride has been able to offer services such as haircuts, makeup, binders, a community closet, therapy, speech therapy, and friendship to help people during their transition. Individuals can register on the Knox Pride [affirmation page](#) and arrive to be surrounded by instant kinships, a family, something that so many of us often take for granted. Just a bit of support and kindness goes a long way and that has never been more apparent than it is on Affirmation Day. Gender affirmation is invaluable. I have personally

witnessed individuals walk-in shy, withdrawn and looking down. They leave feeling rejuvenated, smiling with their head held high, full of hope for the future and knowing that they will never have to feel alone again. They leave feeling seen. They leave happy.



Events and services have continued to grow at the Pride Center with 25 events scheduled for the month of October alone. On any given day of

the week you can drop into the center and take a yoga or dance class, attend youth and adult group meetings, shop or vend at markets, make crafts, sing cathartic karaoke, or even play in Magic: The Gathering tournaments.

The center currently offers two suites, the Collaboration Suite for smaller meetings, with two

accessible computers and a printer, while the Vocational Suite that hosts class activities and larger groups. There are plans to expand to a third suite in the very near future which will enable the center to accommodate even larger gatherings.

In 2023, the Pride Center would like to continue working with Knoxville's youth and beyond, but they would also like to begin to understand the needs of Knoxville's elderly LGBTQIA+ and how they can best serve that demographic of our community. Knox Pride recognizes the importance of supporting senior citizens and wants to make that happen for the LGBTQ+ community.

It has been a successful year at the center, with the group accomplishing more than anyone could have anticipated. The center is run 100% by volunteers and is always in need of financial, non-perishable food, clothing, and beauty donations in order to provide services. In short, it can't be done without your help. You can donate directly to the Pride Center through a one time or recurring donation on their [website](#).

For more information about the Pride Center, please visit our website or reach out to info@knoxpride.com. The Pride Center is located at 4028 Chapman Hwy, Knoxville, TN 37920

As we look back at the last year of service, we want to recognize folks who have worked hard to make this a reality:

Heather Quinsey

Nathan Higdon

Traci Sisson

Jakob Davis

JorDon Herron

Cade Herron

Nick D'Alessandro

Handy Randy & Heidi

Keri King

Big Gay James

Alexander Saffel

Story VaNess

Joslynn & Braddock

Chris Anderson

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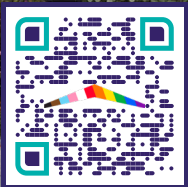
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DON'T PANIC

THE REALITY OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN MINORITY COMMUNITIES.

Written by Knox Pride Blog

All of June, people listened to coming out stories and all the difficulties that came with coming out and those people had to deal with in their everyday lives after that. Most people understand that coming out is stressful, but what most do not realize is that mental health affects people more than most want to admit. According to The Department of Health and Human Services, “roughly two-thirds of people with a diagnosable mental illness do not seek treatment. Minority racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. are even less likely to get help when struggling with a mental illness.” This is due to multiple scenarios like income, resources, awareness, and information.

Social media has left everyone in 2021 aware that minorities are dealing with plenty of segregation issues. Minorities have so much to deal with just because they look a little different than the majority. This is nothing new for the society, but awareness has launched to a level where people are more aware of these issues. ABC News claims that awareness is rising thanks to the use of social media and the introduction of catchy hashtags like #blacklivesmatter and #stopasianhate. Racism may not go away anytime soon, but more people are confronting racism as awareness is spreading. This helps life become a little more manageable for minorities, but it does not change the fact that mental illness is not always getting the treatment needed.

In most scenarios, minorities usually come from low-income families. Lower incomes mean less resources. Insurance can be expensive, and even those with insurance are still cautious of having to pay for high deductibles every time they are seen for medical appointments. Some people just do not seek professional help for the simple reason that it is uncomfortable to go to a professional and acknowledge that what they are going through is serious.

Now is a time to raise awareness in mental health issues. Telling friends to reach out is important. There are plenty of coworkers that seem to have their lives together at the work center and may not always show signs of struggling with mental health. Some people go into work everyday to just get through work. It is often difficult to recognize who is struggling and who is not without them saying something. It is often surprising how many people will reach out to those that make it known that they have an open-door policy.

The Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network has done their research on mental health struggles. They stress the importance of raising awareness when it comes to mental health issues. There are plenty of people that do not realize that mental health can actually cause serious issues. Not only can mental health impact the person dealing with the issue, but it can also affect their friends and family. Those around are often having to be put in difficult situations by the time it is too late.

Sure, it may seem like an inconvenience to tell others about struggles. However, there are some things that should not be kept to oneself. For example, when it comes to work struggles there are usually other coworkers that will relate in some form or another to the situation. If not, someone can usually notify others about the resources available at and through the work center.

Always reach out to those that do show signs of struggles with mental health. According to The Department of Health and Human Services, minorities “living below the poverty line are three times more likely to suffer from psychological distress than those above the poverty line.” It is really important for those people to realize that they can always reach out to someone in times of need. Not everyone has a family they can reach out to or are not comfortable speaking out to them about those issues.

The best way to deal with mental health issues is to raise awareness and reach out to coworkers and friends. Let everyone know that they have someone to reach out to. Make sure everyone knows that what they are going through is nothing to be ashamed of. Resources only work if people feel comfortable enough to use them. If someone does reach out, it is important not to brush them off. The moment may be awkward, but it can change someone’s life.



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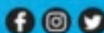
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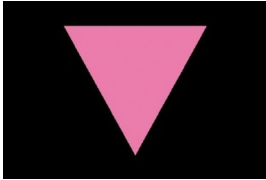
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LGBTQIA2S+ FLAGS

The first gay "flag" (not by choice.) Worn during the Nazi regime to distinguish gay people as "low in the camp heirarchy."

Pink triangle flag



Gilber Baker flag



Bear flag



Rainbow flag



POC Inclusive flag



Queer POC flag



"Progress" flag



Bisexual flag



Pansexual flag



Polysexual flag



Asexual flag



Demisexual flag



Lesbian flag



Intersex flag



Transgender flag



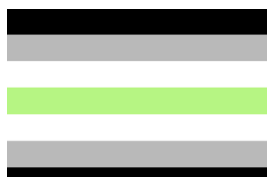
Genderqueer flag



Genderfluid flag



Agender flag



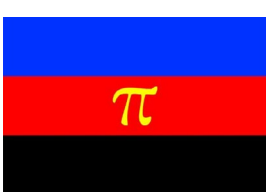
Aromantic flag



Non-Binary flag



Polyamory flag



Straight Ally flag



Metagender flag



"Intersex Progress" Pride flag



Source: WCSU

The most current iteration of the pride flag by Valentino Vecchiotti (2021).

Happy Knoxville Pride
Homecoming



South Press



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SMALL BUSINESSES AND CREATING SAFE SPACES FOR QUEER PEOPLE.

Written by April Thomas, photos courtesy of April Thomas

When I moved to Knoxville in 2010, I wanted to feel acceptance from the community. However, what I soon learned was that a lot of people in our community were looking for acceptance within in their own skin.

Decorating your body with your story is an intimate, personal journey and with Born This Way, we wanted to make sure there was a place for all people, full of support and devoid of judgment.

We wanted to create a world where people of all types felt safe being authentic, no matter where they are in their journey of finding themselves. We recognized the need for a gender inclusive and body positive environment where shame is left outside, or better yet...set free completely. What started as a creative space where societal and self-proclaimed outcasts could have a safe place to hang out, create art, and express themselves through safe body modifications; ended up becoming a space that facilitated life-altering experiences for people to create their most authentic, true selves.



Encouraging people to express themselves through body art is a huge part of queer culture, and body piercing celebrates its roots in queer history. Being part of and witnessing the instant boosts in self-esteem while supporting people on their journey to find themselves is an honor we have never taken lightly.



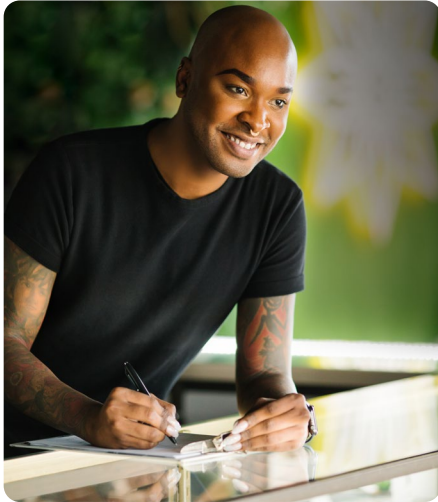
Providing this space turned into a journey of discovery for the next decade where billboards, magazine representation, and other media streams have helped change the way our entire community accepts the value of being unique. For our team, it started in the studio, but it quickly became much bigger than that. As someone who is no stranger to being criticized due to my appearance, gender, and sexuality, I wanted tattooed and queer people to be seen as professionals, as community leaders, and as fashion icons because that is who we are. I wanted people's uniqueness to be acknowledged and celebrated throughout the community, not just within the walls at Born This Way.

I believe we helped make that happen through our inclusive media and advertising strategies. Business professionals of all types now come into our studio to share their experience of self-expression with us. This wave of radical self-expression continues as we focus on leading by example and showing the world what we offer and most importantly, who we are. Being able to present this gift to the people who walk through our doors helps to inspire other people they encounter to further express their true self. Having the courage to be yourself is a life altering and world changing activity. By being yourself, you change your own world, as well as someone else's.

I wanted tattooed and queer people to be seen as professionals, as community leaders, and as fashion icons because that is who we are.”

**April Thomas,
Owner, Born This Way**

As a business owner, I always have the opportunity to change myself and my community for the better. Including everyone has always been paramount to what we believe. We all have stories to tell and the first step towards inclusivity is to listen. Listen to your clients, community, and friends. Share in their experiences and use those stories as a foundation to do better. One important bit of information that I have learned is that just being queer isn't enough. We, as queer people, must continue to put in the work to achieve inclusiveness.



We must grow and evolve as new information presents itself. That means hiring a diverse staff and taking their suggestions and experiences into account when creating protocols and policies, as well as updating signage, verbiage, and our own vocabularies when better phrasing becomes available. That means being sensitive to others and adjusting to new ideas, terms, and preferences. All of that must be intentional, as it doesn't happen by accident. We could all do more of that, and many businesses are beginning to do so, but we still have such a long way to go. The business landscape of Knoxville has evolved over the last decade that I have managed a small business here.

I have found the Knoxville community to be supportive, flexible, and progressing in big ways. I'm so proud to live and work here. I feel pride in serving our community and advocating for others to challenge the status quo on acceptance. Accepting each other for who we are at any phase of life is a well-respected virtue that I know so many of us share.

Be Yourself. Be Proud. You Are Beautiful.

April Thomas is owner of Born This Way Body Arts as well as an accomplished photographer, model, realtor, and veteran.



The results are in. Subaru wins. Again.



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A LOVE LETTER TO TRANS FOLKS, FROM TRANS FOLKS...

Written by Joslynn Fish and Story VanNess

You are magical.

Too often cis people, even the most well-meaning of allies, control our narrative, and too often that narrative is defined by the tragedy and trauma we experience. Too often our stories are told from their perspectives...

Today, though, we are reclaiming our voice to celebrate us and to talk about our joy.

Trans joy is radical and beautiful. When we see ourselves and experience gender euphoria, we glow.

Good luck keeping your trans masc friend from beaming shirtless in a superhero stance after getting the binder or top surgery they needed. But, then again, why would you want to?

Watch your trans femme friend enjoy (and spin and spin and spin) their new skirt...

Think about the first time you saw someone like you and that all new possibilities opened up.

Or count the selfies we post before and after we affirm our gender. While you are there, look at the difference in the joy on our faces.

Of course, none of this is universal. We are all individuals. We all experience euphoria in different ways, and that is perfectly normal. You are not required to do/not do anything, like/dislike anything, or change anything about yourself. You are valid in whatever decisions you make for yourself, because, honestly, you are the only one who can truly know you.

Though, at least in our experiences, other trans people can often come close to truly knowing us. When we find each other, we thrive. We can talk and joke about all those things that only we can know: The feeling of seeing yourself for the first time... and of other people seeing you for the first time... Picking your own name... The weird things that cause us dysphoria/euphoria... Through this we heal ourselves.

You are powerful, beautiful, and magical. You always have been.

Work on knowing and accepting your worth. It is inherent to you. Cis-normative standards need not apply. Living authentically and unapologetically is a tall order, but so worth it.

Take up space and use your voice kindly, but firmly. You are worthy of respect. Again, this is difficult, but it is worth the effort and the anxiety. Do not let people take advantage of you by making you feel less or unworthy. Do not accept less just because they have hate in their hearts.

Lastly, when it gets difficult (it will), when you start picking on or doubting yourself (you will), or when things just seem unbearable (they do sometimes) remember you have the love of these two fierce, beautiful, powerful, occasionally cranky, magical trans women. Because... you do.

Joslynn & Story

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Joslynn' and the signature on the right is 'Story'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

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OCTOBER events

Date	Event	Time
10/2/2022	Social Club for Bisexual, Lesbian, & Gay Women	7-9pm
10/5/2022	Amateur Drag Night	8pm
10/6/2022	Social Dance for Everybody	6:30-7:30pm
10/7/2022	Rainbow Teen Social Club	6-8pm
10/9/2022	Mystics Market	6-8:30pm
10/10/2022	Crafts & Spooky Story Time	7-9pm
10/12/2022	Amateur Drag Night	8pm
10/13/2022	Knox YWCA Presents: Domestic Violence 101 Training	5-6pm
10/14/2022	The Umbrella Group (15 to 17 year old social group)	6-8pm
10/15/2022	History Gathering Nights	3-6pm
10/16/2022	Social Club for Bisexual, Lesbian, & Gay Women	7-9pm
10/17/2022	Social Dance for Everybody	6:30-7:30pm
10/18/2022	UTK Presents: Wills Clinic and Q&A	6:30-8:30pm
10/19/2022	Amateur Drag Night	8pm
10/20/2022	Big Gay James' Queer Cinema Club	7-9pm
10/21/2022	Rainbow Teen Social Club	6-8pm
10/22/2022	KQYA - Young Adult Meet Up	5:30-8pm
10/22/2022	The Rocky Horror Picture Show w/ Shadowcast	8pm-10pm
10/26/2022	Amateur Drag Night	8pm
10/26/2022	Hocus Pocus Bingo @ Maple Hall	7:30-9:30p
10/27/2022	Queer Yoga w/ Amberly	6-7pm
10/28/2022	The Umbrella Group (15 to 17 year old social group)	6-8pm
10/29/2022	Brattie's Cathartic Karaoke	7-9pm
10/30/2022	Trunk or Treat	4-7pm
10/30/2022	Amateur Drag Night: Halloween Edition	8pm

CONNECT WITH KNOX PRIDE

About our organization

We are formally known as the East Tennessee Equality Council (ETEC) d.b.a. Knox Pride, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Our mission is to provide and conduct educational, cultural, and informational programs supporting the LGBTQ+ community throughout East Tennessee. All of our board members and volunteers are just that — volunteers. And we are grateful for all of their contributions to help Knox Pride.



KNOX PRIDE