

The Official

COME OUT

ST. PETE
Guide 2022





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Christy-Lynne Lapine, 2021 SPC Graduate

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COME OUT

ST. PETE



Come OUT St. Pete's mission is to advocate for community awareness and acceptance of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

Royal Court photos by Terry Scopelliti.

COSP 2022 Board Members

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JOSHUA WALLACE, Treasurer

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As You Are

The History of National Coming Out Day

Ryan Williams-Jent

The LGBTQ community and its allies began celebrating National Coming Out Day more than 30 years ago, on the one-year mark of 1987's historical National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Believing the personal is political, founding activists Robert Eichberg and Jean O'Leary sought to unite their community by positively raising awareness for LGBTQ civil rights as they celebrated authenticity.

"Most people think they don't know anyone gay or lesbian, and in fact, everybody does," Eichberg later reflected. "It is imperative that we come out and let people know who we are and disabuse them of their fears and stereotypes."

In 1988, the first National Coming Out Day was celebrated in 18 states, expanding nationwide to all 50 and even seven other countries by 1990. It was then that organizers partnered with the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest LGBTQ civil rights group, to reach more people than ever before.

"We first observed National Coming Out Day as a reminder that one of our most basic tools is the power of

coming out," they share ahead of each Oct. 11 celebration. "One out of every two Americans has someone close to them who is gay or lesbian. For transgender people, that number is only one in 10.

"Coming out – whether it is as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer – STILL MATTERS," the organization continues. "When people know someone who is LGBTQ, they are far more likely to support equality under the law. Beyond that, our stories can be powerful to each other."

It's important to remember that everyone has the right to decide for themselves if, how and when they come out, which doesn't only happen once. It can be an ongoing process for many in the LGBTQ community, which National Coming Out Day fully embraces.

Whatever your age, gender identity, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation and much more, there's a community waiting to welcome you whenever you're ready. Come OUT St. Pete celebrates you for who you are on this and every National Coming Out Day. 🏳️



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ST. PETE

As I reflect on my involvement with Come Out St. Pete and the achievements that have been accomplished in its six years, I can honestly say that I am extremely PROUD to have been a part of a board of directors and an organization in which history is being made.

It has been an absolute honor to serve on the board of directors over the last four years and to witness the evolution and direction that COSP is going. I want to personally thank our board for an incredible year and for the hard work and positive energy that they have given to this organization!

We may never know the impact that is made by a story that was shared, an event that was hosted, a simple comment that was posted on Facebook. We have had people come up to us at our T-dances held monthly at the Garage on Central, thanking members of our Royal Court for sharing their stories and for confidently being their authentic selves, telling them they were an inspiration.

We have had mothers approach us at events with their child that they believe to be LGBTQ but haven't come out yet. They have told us they brought them to that specific event to show them that "it's okay!"

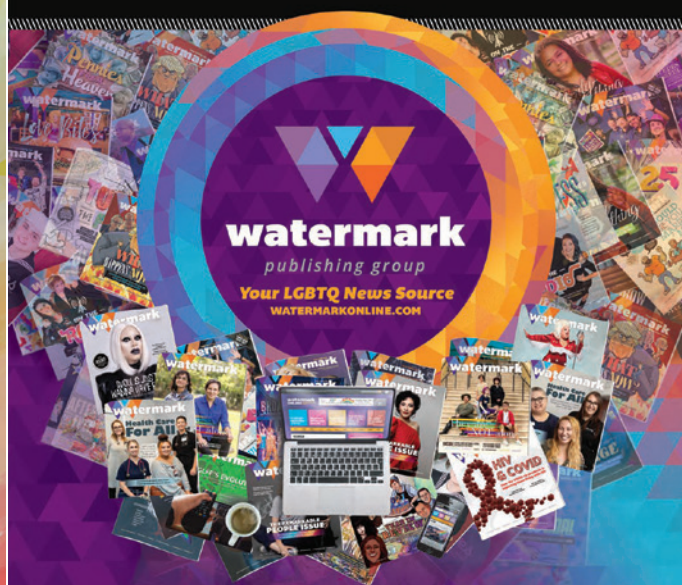
We were instrumental in sponsoring a camper and an event at this year's first Camp Out, an LGBTQ youth camp in Ocala in June. We founded the first LGBTQ and Ally Longstreth Family Scholarship in partnering with St. Petersburg College. None of this would even be possible without the continued support within our community and partnerships!

Thank you for believing in our mission and for your continued financial support! It has been an amazing year and I look forward to what the future holds for Come Out St. Pete!

Chris Jones
Come Out St. Pete Chair



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Dear Proud LGBTQ+ residents, visitors, and allies,

On behalf of the residents of St. Pete, welcome to this year's "Come Out St. Pete" celebration! Come Out St. Pete is an organization that seeks to raise awareness and advocate for equity and justice for the LGBTQ+ community. Like the "National Come Out Day" on October 11th, Come Out St. Pete advocates for community awareness and acceptance by celebrating our city's vibrant LGBTQ+ history and achievements through events like this.

Inclusivity is one of the guiding principles of my administration. City staff, residents, and businesses all work with the intention of making inclusivity a cornerstone of our great city. I am proud St. Pete is a place where diversity is embraced and celebrated, and I am honored to continue our city's proud tradition of supporting our LGBTQ+ community.

While you partake in the celebration, take a moment to enjoy our world-class culinary scene, visit one of the many museums and galleries, support our amazing local businesses, walk along the waterfront, listen to some local music and feel the vibrant spirit that is St. Pete — all while knowing you are embraced no matter what the color of your skin, how you identify, what you wear or who you love.

Thank you for choosing St. Pete and I hope you enjoy your stay.

We are St. Pete!

Thank you,

Kenneth T. Welch
Mayor



BE

PR



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 <p>ANASTASIA THE NEW BROADWAY MUSICAL</p> <p>SUN DEC 04 RUTH ECKERD HALL</p>	 <p>DEBBIE GIBSON'S <i>Winterlicious</i></p> <p>THU DEC 15 BILHEIMER CAPITOL THEATRE</p>
 <p>MURRAY & PETER PRESENT A DRAG QUEEN CHRISTMAS HOSTED BY NINA WEST</p> <p>THU DEC 29 RUTH ECKERD HALL</p>	 <p>TRIXIE AND KATYA</p> <p>FRI MAR 03 RUTH ECKERD HALL</p>
 <p>A TRIBUTE CONCERT EXPERIENCE LIKE NO OTHER R.E.S.P.E.C.T. A CELEBRATION OF THE MUSIC OF ARETHA FRANKLIN</p> <p>THU MAR 30 RUTH ECKERD HALL</p> <p> THE RUTH ECKERD HALL EXPERIENCE</p>	 <p>THE STORY OF EMILIO & GLORIA ESTEFAN ON YOUR FEET! A NEW MUSICAL</p> <p>FRI & SAT APR 7-8 RUTH ECKERD HALL</p> <p> RuthEckerdHall.com Artists, days, dates and times subject to change. Ruth Eckerd Hall, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization</p> <p> Times Bay</p>

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Proclamation

CITY OF ST. PETERSBURG

WHEREAS, National Coming Out Day was founded on October 11, 1988 by Robert Eichsberg and Jean O'Leary marking the anniversary of the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights; and

WHEREAS, **Come OUT St. Pete** was formed in 2017 to celebrate this annual event locally; and

WHEREAS, St. Petersburg and the surrounding Tampa Bay communities have continued to be a destination for LGBTQ+ people to live, work, and play; and

WHEREAS, The LGBTQ+ community adds to the unique fabric of St. Petersburg, creating neighborhood diversity and expanding arts and cultural opportunities, and more; and

WHEREAS, The Grand Central District has one of the largest concentrations of LGBTQ+ owned or managed businesses in the country; and

WHEREAS, St. Petersburg aims to be a welcoming and safe place to members of the transgender community, especially as egregious hate crimes and murders of trans people grow nationally.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Kenneth T. Welch, Mayor of the City of St. Petersburg, Florida, do hereby proclaim October 11, 2022 as

COME OUT ST. PETE DAY

in St. Petersburg and urge citizens to show support for and acceptance of each other on this and every day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the official Seal of the City of St. Petersburg, County of Pinellas, and State of Florida to be affixed this 1st day of October, 2022.



Kenneth T. Welch
Mayor



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Supporter Spotlight

Michael Parks Wertheim



Captain Michael Parks Wertheim, USAF (Ret) relocated to St. Petersburg after retiring from the military but has been a longtime resident of Pinellas County and the surrounding Tampa Bay area. After graduating from Largo High School, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps serving for five years before transitioning to the Air Force and commissioning as a Cyber Operations officer.

He graduated from the University of South Florida with a degree in Business Administration and attended Saint Leo University for a master's in business administration and Cyber Security. Michael currently works as Director of Operations and owns a private consulting firm specializing in optimizing business operations.

Michael is a proud ally and supporter of the LGBTQ community and became involved with Come Out St. Pete in 2022. As a parent, Michael has experienced many of the highs and lows faced by families when a member comes out and does not feel fully supported or safe to be who they are. He wanted to be more involved with the LGBTQ community in hopes his experience and relationship with his son will help promote positive success stories and opportunities to address some of the issues faced by the LGBTQ community and their families. Thank you, Michael! 🏳️‍🌈





OUT & PROUD

Come Out St. Pete celebrates six years

Ryan Williams-Jent

Come OUT St. Pete has advocated for every sexual orientation and gender identity since 2017. Six years in, the organization is more eager to serve the community than ever.

"We have discovered that our mission is still of importance," COSP Chair Chris Jones says. "The board of directors has learned to work very cohesively and productively this year in creating new ideas and providing more defined goals."

That included the launch of the Longstreth Family LGBTQ+ Scholarship, named after COSP co-founder Brian Longstreth. COSP designed it to award up to \$5,000 for students attending St. Pete College through a joint effort with the school's foundation.

Board member Christopher Gorman was instrumental in creating it. "Small stones make big ripples and simple acts of kindness are just as impactful as the big ones," he says.

"We've discovered that we are most effective when we reach out to partner with other like-minded organizations who share similar missions and objectives, particularly for LGBTQ youth," Board member Mick Ferrari adds. One such partnership is

through COSP's sponsorship of CampOUT, an LGBTQ youth summer camp in the region.

"I think we have found there is power in numbers and our ability to partner has expanded our footprint to address issues and promote causes," Board Member Michael Wertheim also notes.

Helping COSP serve the community is its latest Royal Court. The organization's annual "Come Out As You Are" Royal Court Talent Competition was held Sept. 11, naming three 2023 representatives.

They are Miss Come Out St. Pete Rockell Blu, Mr. Come Out St. Pete Adam Col and Ambassador Caezia Giovanni Kresh. Each advocate is sure to dazzle in the year to come.

In celebration of NCOD 2022, COSP held its inaugural "Family" Day Oct. 9 and will continue to commemorate the importance of coming out with events year-round. Organizers believe that mission is still critically important.

"There are still those out there are in the closet or haven't found where they feel they may fit in yet within our LGBTQ+ community," Jones says. This year and in all those to come, COSP is ready to help. 🌈





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EVENTS

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Monthly | The Garage on Central Ave.

COSP sponsors T-Dances at the Garage, featuring vendors, raffles and OUTstanding performances from the Royal Court!

"FAMILY" DAY CELEBRATION & 5K RUN/WALK

Oct. 9 | Seminole Park, St. Petersburg

Local vendors, entertainment and more came together in celebration of National Coming Out Day after a 5K Run/Walk presented in partnership with the Pride Run Series.

HALLOWEEN ON CENTRAL 2

Oct. 31 | Central Ave., St. Petersburg

COSP will once again take part in Halloween on Central, when 22 blocks will be closed to cars and motor vehicles from noon-5 p.m.

ANNUAL COAT DRIVE

Throughout November | St. Petersburg

Our annual coat drive will help those in need, with multiple drop off locations and partnerships detailed soon.

ANNUAL TOY DRIVE

Throughout December | St. Petersburg

Our annual Toy Drive will benefit families in need of a little help this year around the holidays, with drop-off locations and partnership detailed soon.



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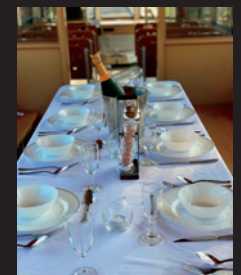
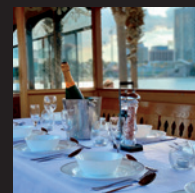
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