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Oct. 11 - 17, 2020



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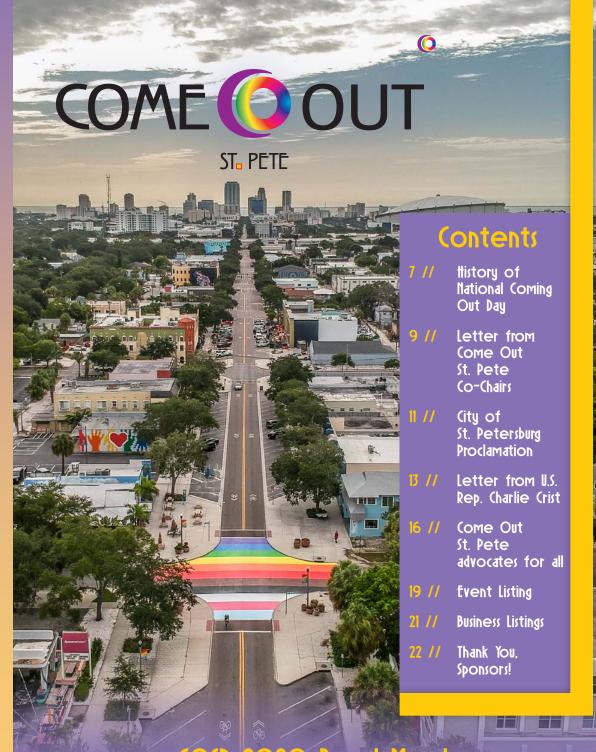
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Come OUT St. Pete's mission is to advocate for community awareness and acceptance of all sexual orientations and gender identities.



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# The History of National Coming Out Day

#### **RYAN WILLIAMS-JENT**

he 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.

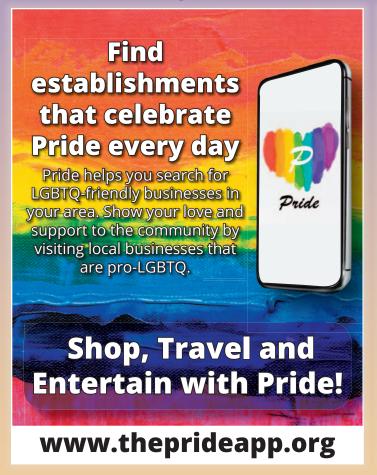
"Coming out – whether it is as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer – STILL MATTERS," the organization continues. "When people know someone who is LGBTQ, they are far more likely to support equality under the law. Beyond that, our stories can be powerful to each other."

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 recognizes and embraces.

Whatever your age, gender identity, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation and much more, there's a community waiting to welcome you.

Come OUT St. Pete celebrates you for who you are on this and every National Coming Out Day.







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# ST. PETE

**ome Oll St. Pete** is celebrating our 4th year in the Grand Central District! The concept of the annual festival and parade was established as a desire to celebrate National Coming Out Day on October 11th.

This year's celebration on October 17th will be very scaled back and will maintain socially-distant protocols due to COVID-19! We have been working closely with the City of St. Petersburg, the mayor's office and the Grand Central District businesses in following all CDC and city guidelines, so we can provide an event that is socially-distanced.

Our top priority is for everyone attending this celebration in person to feel safe. Masks and hand sanitizer will be available at each vendor location. For those who choose to stay at home, we will be streaming much of the event LIVE on our Facebook page, so you still can attend from the safety and comfort of your home.

Our vendors will be placed in strategic locations up and down the Grand Central District between 17th and 31st Streets to provide enough space to maintain social distancing. Our Come Out As You Are Royal Court will be performing and conducting LIVE interviews throughout the day.

We made the decision not to hold the annual parade and instead chose to partner with the West Flamingo Car Club and the League of Jeepers in hosting a car cruise up Central Avenue. It begins at 11 a.m. on October 17th. Decorate your car, jeep or motorcycle and come join us.

While many of our other weeklong activities are cancelled this year, we were pleased to offer a new in-person event for 2020.

Come OUT St. Pete, in partnership with Eight O'Clock Theatre, scheduled a weekend of performances of Terrance McNally's "Mothers and Sons" October 9th-11th at the Central Park Performing Arts Theater in Largo. Protocols were in place to ensure the safety of guests and performers at this event.

We also had an unfurling of our city block-long rainbow flag within Seminole Park in Historic Kenwood on Saturday, October 11th. For a list of all of our events, utilize this guide and visit ComeOUTStPete.org/Events.

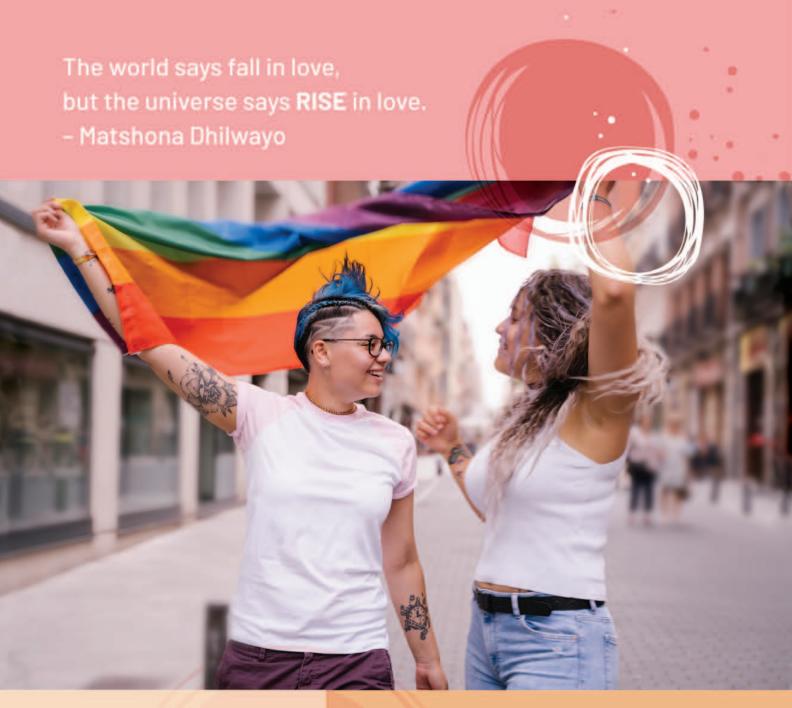
It is an honor to be a part of the all-volunteer board of directors and committees in planning these events throughout the year!

We welcome you to Come OUT and celebrate your individuality, inclusivity and authenticity within the LGBTQ+ community here in St. Petersburg.

SINCERELY, CHRIS JONES & LORALEI MATISSE COME OUT ST. PETE CO-CHAIRS







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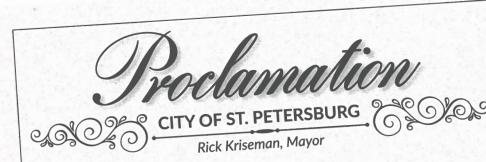
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# SUNCOAST IMAGO

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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 diversity in neighborhoods, arts, 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 despite the nationwide rise in egregious hate crimes and murders of trans people.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Rick Kriseman, Mayor of the City of St. Petersburg, Florida, do hereby proclaim October 17, 2020 as

# COME OUT ST. PETE DAY

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



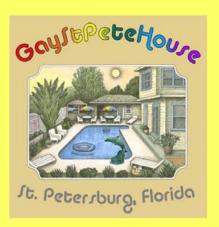
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the official Seal of the City of St. Petersburg, County of Pinellas, and State of Florida to be affixed the day of October 2020.

Rick Kriseman Mayor









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Come Out St. Pete 2529 Central Ave. St. Petersburg, FL 33712

October 11, 2020

Dear Friends at Come Out St. Pete,

I write to you in celebration of Come Out St. Pete as we celebrate National Coming Out Day on

We are living through a period in our nation's history unlike any other, when the impacts of COVID-19 have left us isolated from the friends, neighbors, and the community we depend on during times of crisis. Additionally, racial injustice has left our nation divided and has led to increased incidents of racially-motivated violence, impacting LGBTQ people of color at disproportionally higher rates. Now more than ever, the Come Out St. Pete Festival is an important source of connection for vulnerable members of the LGBTQ community in our city, who may be separated from the friends, colleagues, or other members of their 'chosen family' who have provided them support when their immediate family would not. For all those who have been forced into unsafe or unkind living situations due to COVID-19, this festival and its message of selfacceptance, freedom of expression, and love are a light at the end of an often dark and difficult tunnel. While Come Out St. Pete may look a little different this year, it remains a powerful celebration of our LGBTQ community and the work its members have done throughout this crisis

I appreciate and commend the efforts of Come Out St. Pete for creating a space of acceptance, tolerance, and love precisely when we need it most. Sincerely,

Charlie Crist

United States Congressman (FL-13)



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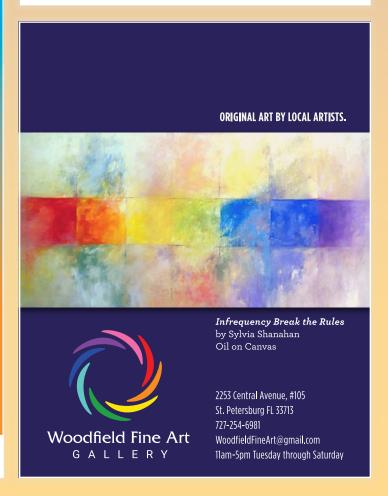
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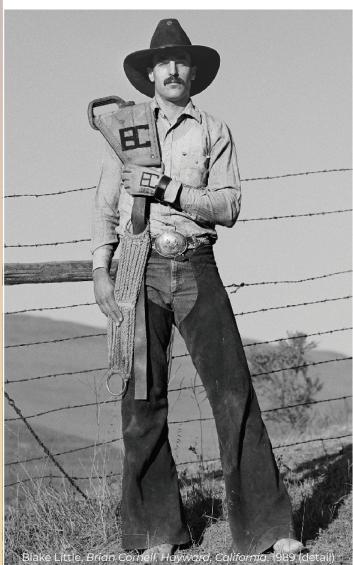


PFLAG is the nation's largest LGBTQ+ support organization. Contact a local chapter for dates and times of peer support meetings.

PFLAG Tampa: pflag.tampa@gmail.com PFLAG St Pete: pflag.st.pete@gmail.com PFLAG Riverview: pflagriverview@gmail.com PFLAG Wesley Chapel/Pasco: pflagwesleychapel@gmail.com PFLAG Dunedin: info@pflagdunedin.org

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# COME OUT ST PETE 2020 Pete advocates for al

#### **RYAN WILLIAMS-JENT**

ome OUT St. Pete (COSP) has advocated for the acceptance of every sexual orientation and gender identity since 2017, encouraging a sense of community by promoting equality for all.

While 2020 has been a year unlike any other – as communities like ours unite against bigotry across the country and face a pandemic threatening the globe – that mission is unchanged. In fact, this year has only strengthened it.

After worldwide protests against police brutality began in May, COSP partnered with the Dr. Carter G. Woodson African American Museum to stand against racism. Its board, along with fellow advocacy organization Project No Labels, safely gathered to hold a vigil June 27. "Together We Rise" sought to unite the LGBTQ and Black communities in St. Petersburg.

"We must recognize the origin of Pride was a riot against police actions," COSP shared at the time, "and show solidarity when any minority is facing persecution."

More than 100 volunteers came together, maintaining social distance to unfurl COSP's 375-foot rainbow flag. They knelt for nearly nine minutes of silence to reflect on the Black Lives Matter movement and Pride Month.

The museum's executive director Terri Lipsey Scott reflected on the virtually-streamed vigil afterwards, calling it a "beautiful and moving tribute to Black Lives Matter while commemorating PRIDE in our community."

St. Petersburg's commitment to inclusivity continued in the next month. LGBTQ advocates worked together to raise more than \$7,000 to install a Progressive Pride street mural in the Grand Central District, seen above, which COSP's board voted unanimously to help fund.

The LGBTQ community's creativity took center stage in August as well, when COSP and Woodfield Fine Art presented its annual art contest and exhibit. Designed to promote Tampa Bay artists and celebrate National Coming Out Day, more than 150 adult and youth submissions were received.

This year's grand-prize winner was "Peek.A.Boo," painted by St. Petersburg artist Nelson Perez. The piece can be seen on promotional materials for COSP's fourth year, including the cover of this year's guide.

More than 60 other COSP finalists remain on display in an ongoing virtual exhibit, including the youth category's winner



"New Pride Phoenix" by Maya Rodriguez. View all of this year's outstanding selections at WoodfieldFineArt.com.

COSP's pageantry also moved to a virtual format this year with the inaugural Come Out As You Are drag contest. Held Aug. 13-Sept. 7, Tampa Bay contestants who perform as drag queens, drag kings and those who identify as either transgender or nonbinary entered to represent COSP in its fourth year.

Ensuring COSP's pageantry was more inclusive was a natural fit. "There is so much going on in the world where we are learning how to include and embrace each other," the board reflected at the time. "We need to do that within our own community as well."

Video entries were submitted for consideration that included visual representations of Pride and various talents. Three winners were unveiled in a socially-distant ceremony streamed live from Enigma in St. Petersburg on Sept. 7.

COSP crowned drag queen and transgender entertainer Stephanie Stuart, nonbinary entertainer Kristina White and drag king Joanie Werner to represent the organization this year. Learn more about them by watching each representative's entry at ComeOutStPete.org/Contest and during live streamed events at this year's celebration.

From partnering with Equality Florida to contact pro-LGBTQ voters ahead of this year's general election to unfurling their rainbow flag in St. Petersburg's Historic Kenwood for National Coming Out Day 2020, COSP's community outreach continues.

All that's missing is you!





#### ABOVE LEFT

#### **ROYAL COURT:**

(L-R) Joanie Werner, Kristina White and Stephanie Stuart step out and into their crowns at Enigma on Sept. 7.

PHOTO COURTESY
COME OUT ST. PETE

#### ABOVE/BESIDE RIGHT

#### TOGETHER WE RISE:

Community actvists proudly assert Black Lives Matter on June 27.

PHOTOS BY DYLAN TODD



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# A VERY SOCIALLY DISTANCED CELEBRATION

Oct. 17 | Grand Central District/Online | 12-5 p.m. ome Out St. Pete has had to re-imagine this year's annual event, keeping everyone's safety while celebrating our top priority. This year you'll be able to join us both online with our virtual segments and outside in the sunshine within the Grand Central District.

Come take a stroll and visit vendors at participating businesses, spread out along Central Avenue from 17th to 31st Streets. We are fully committed to providing visitors as much space as possible to walk around and view the wares of our vendors while remaining safe. Masks and hand sanitizer will be available along the route and within the vendor booths.

Social distancing is strongly encouraged at vendor booths and while walking from place to place. For those who want to participate but don't want to venture out, we will be streaming our event LIVE on our Facebook page!



During our live segments, we will be highlighting our vendors, their products and letting you know all about the participating businesses of the Grand Central District. We will also feature entertainment, including from our own Come Out As You Are Royal Court!

They will be performing at various locations throughout the afternoon, so Come OUT St. Pete – whether in–person or online – and show us your pride while supporting incredible vendors, businesses and entertainers!

# COME OUT CRUISE AROUND

Oct. 17 | St. Petersburg/Gulfport 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

ecorate vour vehicle and show your PRIDE, driving slowly and safely throughout St. Petersburg and Gulfport! Street legal vehicles are encouraged to come out and join us, following all traffic signals and driving safely. Line up in the 900 block of 2nd Avenue S., view the route here and check ComeOutStPete.org and WatermarkOnline.com for even more of the latest details!



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