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**THIRD ANNUAL ANNAPOLIS PRIDE PARADE AND FESTIVAL
SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, JUNE 3 ALONG WEST STREET**

***“We are so very proud of our theme this year.
We are focused on doing everything we can to support LGBTQIA+ youth”***

ANNAPOLIS, MD (Wednesday, May 17, 2023) – Following the overwhelming success of its first two pride celebrations, Annapolis Pride, Inc. will hold the third annual Pride Parade and Festival in Maryland’s state capital on Saturday, June 4 beginning at noon. The festival also begins at noon and will end at approximately 5 p.m.

The theme of this year’s parade and festival celebration is “Protecting LGBTQIA+ Youth.” A specially designed logo, that will appear on all materials including t-shirts available for sale, was created by local artist Nikki Brooks.

“We are very proud of our theme this year,” said Joe Toolan, chair of the Annapolis Pride board. “Protecting LGBTQIA+ youth is such an important issue in Annapolis but also across our state and our nation. According to the Trevor Project, more than 150 anti-LGBTQ bills were pre-filed or introduced across 23 states in the first two weeks of 2023.

“Nearly 90% of transgender and nonbinary youth say recent debates around anti-trans bills have negatively impacted their mental health,” Toolan continued. “As a result of these policies and debates in the past year, 45% of trans youth experienced cyberbullying, and nearly one in three reported not feeling safe to go to the doctor or hospital when they were sick or injured.”

Toolan said that just like the previous two parades in 2019 and 2022 (the 2020 and 2021 celebrations were canceled due to COVID), this year’s event will begin at Amos Garrett Boulevard and West Street, and will finish at Calvert and West Streets. Nearly 140 groups from around the state are marching in the parade.

This year's event will feature a kid zone including face painting, a balloon artist and special passport program. Local advocacy group PFLAG will also provide support to parents with Queer children and answer questions on how to best support their LGBTQIA+ child.

Molly Estabrook will serve as the Grand Marshal for this year's parade. She has devoted a large part of her life to helping children grow and thrive. In the past several years, Estabrook has focused primarily on LGBTQ+ youth. Her family has had "too many queer teens who were thrown away by their families sleep on her sofa or eat at her table," she said. These experiences prompted Estabrook to get involved with PFLAG, where she serves on the board, facilitates parent meetings and helps other parents learn how to support their queer children.

"What an honor it is to be Grand Marshal," Estabrook said. "Supporting queer youth has a huge place in my heart. I will continue to work hard to make our community one where the LGBTQ+ youth are safe and comfortable to thrive and shine. At a time when so many negative messages and harmful laws are making headlines, I want these kids to know they are loved; they are welcome; and they are supported."

Toolan said the decision to select Estabrook was an easy one.

"Molly has been a tireless advocate for LGBTQIA+ youth and has become a tremendous resource for parents navigating the journey of supporting their queer child," Toolan said. "Given the theme of this year's parade and festival, she is a perfect fit to be our Grand Marshal."

Nearly 200 artisans, businesses and community organizations are expected to have festival tables in the People's Park, West Street, between Calvert Street and Church Circle, and in adjacent parking lots.

The entertainment lineup on two stages at the festival will feature more than ten musical acts including; Bryce Brown, L.Rodgers, Honey Sol, C. Rafter, Ronshaye Clark, M.E.G.A. YOUTH, Priddy Music Academy and more! Nationally-renowned indie artist whatever mike will headline the music portion of the festival.

Thirty-five food trucks and local restaurants have committed to selling food.

More than 45 businesses and organizations are sponsoring this year's event. Constellation Energy and Live! Casino & Hotel Maryland are the Pride Sponsors.

Annapolis Pride has collaborated with Where in Annapolis to provide real-time parade and festival information through their app which is available to download for free from Apple's App Store or Google's Play Store.

About Annapolis Pride

Annapolis Pride is a grassroots organization started in 2018's to advocate for, empower, and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community in Anne Arundel County to live fully and authentically.