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PREVIEW

LGBTQ parent... normalize

Pride Center, Berkshire Fa

By **Katherine Kiessling**

Feb 4, 2023



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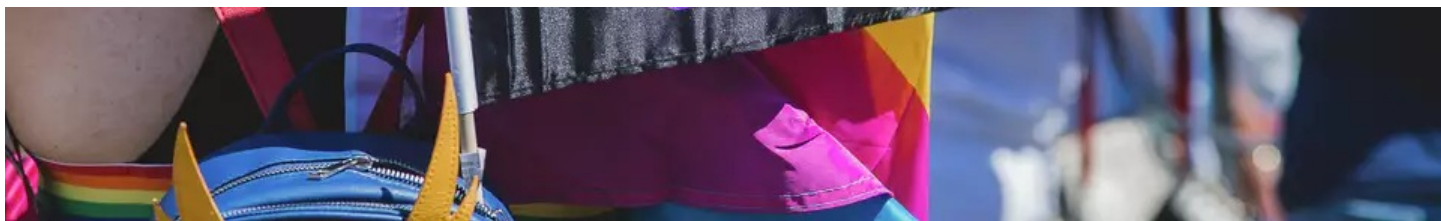
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Were you Seen at the Pride Center's 2021 Block Party on June 13, 2021, in Albany N.Y.?

Jay Zhang Photography

For parents of transgender or queer kids, understanding the process of transitioning or how to best love and support their child can be overwhelming without the right community and tools.

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Mario Kart 64 tournament:
May 18 at Unbeatable

TIMES UNION

The [Pride Center of the Capital Region](#), the LGBTQ+ resource and community center in Albany, and [Berkshire Farm Center and Youth Services](#), which provides foster care, behavioral health resources, shelter care, group homes and detention services to youth across New York state, are hoping to help families through their new partnership launching this month.

More information

"Parenting with Pride" presented by the Pride Center of the Capital Region and Berkshire Farm Center and Youth Services

- Where: Berkshire Farm Center, 427 New Karner Rd., Colonie
- When: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. every fourth Sunday of the month starting Feb. 25, 2023

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"We've gotten a lot of outreach from families, especially parents, who are saying that they want to support their children – they're trying to understand and yet they need more support themselves," said Nathaniel Gray, executive director of the Pride Center.

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Beginning on Feb. 25, "Parenting with Pride" will meet at 11 a.m. on the fourth Saturday of each month at the Berkshire Farm Center on New Karner Road in Colonie. The program, modeled after the [Gender and Family Project in New York City](#), is aimed at the parents and caregivers of LGBTQ+ children between the ages of 5 and 17.

Like most of the Pride Center's programming, "Parenting with Pride" will fall somewhere between social and support, Gray said. Each session will start with a half hour for coffee and mingling with other parents, then it will move into a support group and educational structure. Jen Maley-Wheeler, a licensed master social worker and the Pride Center's director of operations and programs, will facilitate.

“Parents of a transgender kid might come and want to better understand the process of mental health diagnosis to medical transition, what all of the specifics are of that and how to protect their children,” Gray said. “But they might also come because it's really hard to talk to grandma about why they/them is a singular pronoun.”

While the parents meet, another room will be set up for their children to socialize, play and engage with affirming media such as the animated Cartoon Network series “Steven Universe,” which has been acclaimed for its portrayals of gender and sexuality. A social worker will be present in case something arises. This space will be available to all youth who visit Berkshire Farm, not just those attending the “Parenting with Pride” sessions.

Helping parents understand their child was destined to be transgender, gender non-conforming or queer from conception will help normalize queerness and transness, Gray said, and hopefully that can help with a more extreme normalization that will protect the lives of the LGBTQ+ community.

“We are a statistical reality. We have been here the whole time,” Gray said. “Yet there are those pretending like that's not true, and that's what's making us go crazy. That's why we have depression, anxiety and suicide as our stamp of marginalization.”

The Pride Center attempted a similar program last year at its office but realized it needed to reassess the program after three Mondays in a row with no attendees. Feedback from the community revealed the weekday evening time slot and limited parking in downtown Albany made it difficult for families to participate. Partnering with Berkshire Farm allowed the Pride Center to offer the program on

Saturday afternoons at a venue with ample parking.

If the trial run of “Parenting with Pride” is successful, the plan is to bring the program to Berkshire Farm’s other centers in the Capital Region, particularly its rural branches in places like Schoharie. As someone who grew up amid the “cows, corn and guns” of Ohio where there were “more churches than gas stations,” reaching queer, rural youth is important to Gray.

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“One thing that we know for sure is that LGBTQ kids are born in every part of this state, be it New York City or Watertown or somewhere in between,” Gray said.



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Feb 4, 2023



Katherine Kiessling
STAFF WRITER



Katherine Kiessling covers arts and entertainment for the Times Union. The New Jersey native has written for [syracuse.com](#), [Central New York Magazine](#) and [Charleston City Paper](#). You can reach her at katherine.kiessling@timesunion.com.

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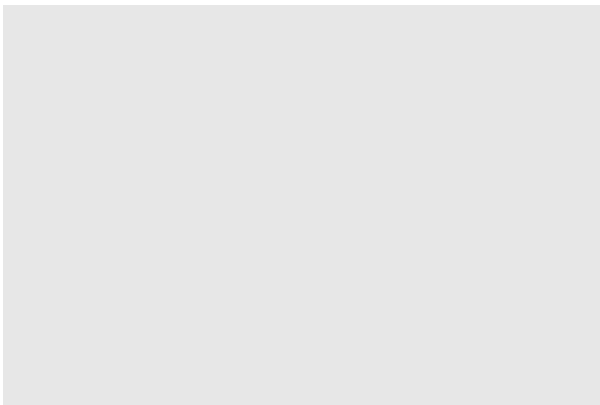
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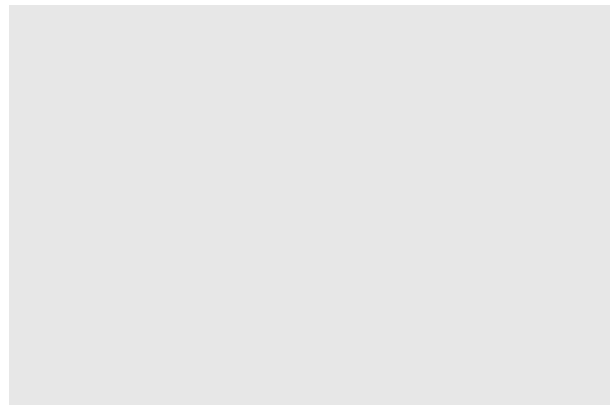
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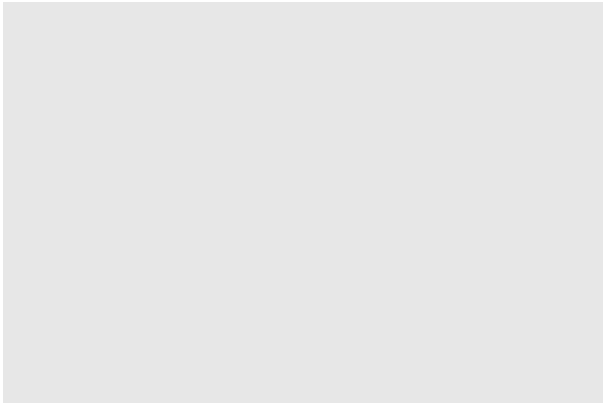
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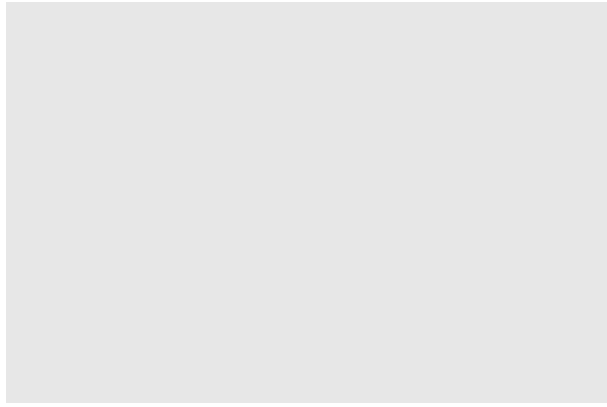
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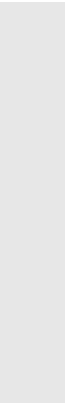
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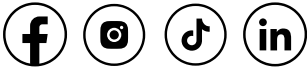


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