



TRI - CITIES , T E N N E S S E E

A Message from TriPride's Board of Directors 2021



TriPride 2021: Continued Optimism Despite Setbacks

Coming into 2021, TriPride's organizers were faced with the same uncertainties caused by COVID-19 as were faced in 2020. However, as winter faded into spring and vaccinations became available to the general public, a renewed optimism bloomed. TriPride's Board of Directors re-engaged with our Bristol TN/VA city partners and picked up where we had left off in 2020. We were on track to bring Pride to Bristol on October 16, 2021. Businesses, organizations, and individuals signed up to march in the parade down State Street. Sponsors, vendors, exhibitors, food trucks, and entertainment were squared away. We were able to meet our fundraising budget despite the continued economic impacts from Covid-19. Street closures and Cumberland Square Park's layout was all planned and ready to go. We were ready to have Pride in Bristol!

However, with a little over a month until the event, our optimistic landscape began to shift. Local Covid-19 cases were once again rising due, in part, to a new, rapidly spreading variant and local reluctance to get vaccinated. The numbers were going in the wrong direction.

TriPride's organizers were faced with difficult questions that had to be answered: Do we continue with the parade and festival where an anticipated 10,000 people would join us? Would it be possible to bring that many people together safely, even though we were outside? If we did move forward, would it be seen as reckless by the community? Would we continue to have sponsor, vendor, and most importantly, community support?

These difficult questions, and more, weighed heavily on our Board of Directors. After much deliberation, TriPride's board unanimously agreed to the incredibly disappointing and frustrating decision to cancel our event once again. Despite obvious disappointment, the community remained supportive and, in most cases, praised the decision.

Despite the ultimate cancellation, TriPride continued to engage with the community and abroad. We were highlighted by TripAdvisor (https://www.tripadvisor.com/Articles-lPfOQP5Jg7k-Small_town_pride_celebrations.html). We partnered with Virginia Tourism who loaned us their Pride themed LOVE letters. The letters were erected in front of the Bristol Hotel for two weeks.

Board members joined the Johnson City Public Library for their teen book club with a Q & A session about two books, *Southernmost* and *The 57 Bus* and how the experiences of the books' characters related to local experiences. We joined local Juneteenth celebrations in both Bristol and Kingsport.



During what would have been our annual Pride week, we held our community hike and picnic in Steeles Creek Park in Bristol.

We also hosted our first-ever Teen event at the Bristol Public Library. The event was well attended and we hope to host more throughout the year. We continued to build upon our partnerships with other local organizations such as Appalachian Sustainable Development, our local Free Moms Hugs chapter, and the newly chartered DEI Alliance of Northeast TN and Southwest VA (www.deialliance.org). And finally, we joined other local and community organizations and decorated a tree for the annual Johnson City holiday presentation.

2020 also saw new board members join us as several board members chose to step down after fulfilling their term. Our gratitude goes out to Alan, Kavita, and Mason for working so hard and supporting TriPride and our community.

So where does that leave us and what are the plans for 2022?

We are committed to bringing Pride to Bristol in 2022 and will announce our 2022 date in January 2022. We firmly believe the third time's a charm, and after three years of planning, we're convinced this will be the best TriPride yet! Between fundraising efforts and capital saved from previous years' day-of-event sales, we were able to meet our budget. We hope to build upon that in 2022 with more fundraising so we can continue to build our rainy-day nest egg and produce a great event. Board members and city partners are determined to make 2022 happen.

We whole-heartedly thank our community for their continued support. Thank you to those who were able to financially contribute to us. And thank you to our community members who are part of our planning committee. TriPride is so much bigger than just its board. It's a reflection of our LGBTQ+ and allied community.

In Pride, and with continued optimism for what the future holds,

TriPride Board of Directors, 2021
www.tripridetn.org