
NEW LONDON PRIDE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION STATEMENT: SUMMER 2010

OUR MISSION

To hold an annual pride festival in New London, Connecticut for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and allied community (GLBTQIA).

THE LEGACY OF PRIDE FESTIVALS: ESCAPING DISCRIMINATION AND PERSECUTION

Sexual and gender minorities have faced discrimination and received little or no protection through civil rights. Throughout the years, GLBTQ persons would seek community through various means including “gay bars” such as The Stonewall in Greenwich Village, New York City. In the past, “gay bars” were frequently raided by the police and there were no legal ways for patrons to protect themselves from this unjust treatment. On June 30, 1969, there was a police raid at The Stonewall in which the people fought back. This would become known as the Stonewall Riots. The following year, GLBTQIA persons would protest on the site demanding equal rights. Each year, the protests would grow. Eventually, other queer communities would protest on this annual day and the date would become a day to celebrate diversity and pride in addition to seeking equal rights. Pride marches were made through towns. Across the globe, pride festivals are held in hundreds of cities and vary in size and scale. They are also held on different dates throughout the year. The legacy of the Stonewall Riots has evolved into a month of GLBTQ history as President Clinton made a proclamation in June 2000 that June would be Gay and Lesbian History Month.

ORGANIZATION AND REACH

New London Pride would be a volunteer led organization consisting of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and allied (GLBTQIA) persons from the area and would serve the Southeastern Connecticut region. The pride festival would be held annually on a date to be coordinated by the committee with consideration of other events held within the region.

According to Alfred Kinsey in the 1948 book *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, approximately 10% of the population identify as gay. The population of the city of New London is 25,000 and the population of Southeastern Connecticut is approximately 250,000. With Kinsey’s calculation, there are over 25,000 queer people in Southeastern Connecticut. The attendance goal of the festival would be 2,500 people and would include friends, family, and allies.

The City of New London has a vibrant waterfront with a downtown area called The District which consists of many shops, cafes, restaurants, galleries, and clubs. Some of the region’s largest employers include Pfizer, Electric Boat, Lawrence & Memorial Hospital, and the City of New

London. Other regional employers include Mystic Aquarium, Mystic Seaport, Mohegan Sun, and Foxwoods Casino. There are three universities that serve Southeastern Connecticut: Connecticut College, Mitchell College and University of Connecticut at Avery Point. In addition to queer resource centers at the local colleges, many of the area high schools have gay/straight alliances. There are several GLBTQIA organizations in the region and include Parents and Friends of Gays and Lesbians (PFLAG-SECT), Mystic Womyn, New London Peoples Forum, Transitioning and Loving Life (T.a.L.L.) and We Are Everywhere With Our Kids (WEWOK).

THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US

Like so many other festivals, New London Pride has to raise funds and find volunteers to organize and run the event. Based on similar pride festivals, approximately \$30,000 would be needed to support a small festival and almost 100 volunteers would be needed from inception to execution. From a fundraising standpoint, around half of those funds would be raised from corporate and individual sponsorship and half would come from advertising, vendor fees, and fundraising events. Committees would include but not be limited to fundraising, festival, volunteers, and outreach.

OUR PLAN

To build and create a sustaining festival consisting of community leaders and volunteers with support from area businesses and organizations.

Anticipated date of 2011, the festival aims to:

- Provide safe space for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex community
- Entertainment by GLBTQIA singers and musicians
- Display works of local queer artists
- Platform for local and national issues affecting sexual and gender minorities
- Representation from supportive organizations and churches
- Queer-friendly merchants to sell wares
- Businesses show their support of diversity

IMPACT OF THE PRIDE FESTIVAL

Put simply, the pride festival would promote diversity within Southeastern Connecticut. It creates a venue where businesses can promote their services, politicians can connect with their constituents, and where downtown New London would increase foot traffic and engage new visitors and invite them to return. New London is known to have a hip and savvy reputation and the inclusion of the GLBTQIA population would improve it substantially.

According to Community Marketing, Inc.'s 14th Annual LGBT Tourism Study, "Pride Events are important and are unaffected by recessionary influences. Nearly a quarter of the respondents reported traveling to another city and spending at least one night in a hotel to attend a Pride event; same as previous years. Nationally, Pride events continue to move millions of hotel

nights in the United States, and Pride remains an important motivator for LGBT travelers under 35.”

Furthermore, research by Witeck-Combs, a Washington DC marketing and communications firm states that “GLBT people have more disposable income because fewer are raising children.” And, per a CNN Fortune article, “between 70 and 80% of gay consumers will give preference to a company that is gay-friendly. Awareness of this “brand loyalty” and “expendable cash” provides Southeastern Connecticut with a potential market that is yet to be tapped into.

COST AND FINANCING

The estimated cost of a small pride festival is \$30,000 based upon similar events. It includes facilities, security, entertainment, marketing, and promotion. The festival committee would ensure that the budget was frugal and efficient.

Unless New London Pride becomes a charitable organization, it must obtain a fiscal agent. That could be obtained through the professional services of Third Sector New England or from an organization in the area that would function as such. This position would allow corporations and businesses to make tax-deductible donations. Without this function, funds would be limited.

THE FEASIBILITY AND PLANNING STUDY

Local GLBTQIA persons have decided to undertake a planning study to determine the feasibility of a New London Pride Festival. We will use this opportunity to build community support in order to finance, organize, and raise attendance for the event. We will also explore the potential to raise \$30,000 through corporate and individual sources in addition to building a committee to make the event successful. The study is designed to gather advice and test reactions from interviews as well as identify potential campaign leaders and volunteers.

FEASIBILITY STUDY CONTRIBUTORS

The Feasibility Study is led by Constance Kristofik, a graduate student at the University of New Haven who is conducting the study as part of an independent study. Constance was the President of a Pride of the Greater Lehigh Valley in Allentown, Pennsylvania. There she worked on five festivals which grew from 3,000 to 7,000 attendees. She works in Advancement at Connecticut College and was formerly an employee at Lawrence & Memorial Hospital. A graduate of the city’s Neighborhood Academy, Constance sees the potential of New London and wants to contribute to its growth.