

NEW LONDON PRIDE FESTIVAL
FEASIBILITY AND PLANNING STUDY SUMMARY REPORT
Prepared for the UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAVEN MPA GRADUATE PROGRAM
July, 2010

STUDY PURPOSE

Test the feasibility of a successful fundraising campaign to raise approximately \$30,000 and build a comprehensive volunteer committee to support a future Pride Festival for sexual and gender minorities in Southeastern Connecticut.

PROCESS

- Interviews with sponsors of community events, leaders and members of local organizations. Individuals who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and allied (GLBTQIA) were also interviewed.
- A total of forty-six (46) interviews were conducted. Thirty-two (32) were personal interviews. Nine (9) telephone interviews were conducted. Five (5) responded to an email survey.
- The Study findings were compiled and reviewed by Constance Kristofik, an MPA graduate student at the University of New Haven. Her recommendations were developed based on her ten years of community organizing and fundraising.

FINDINGS

- The case for the festival committee and for the fundraising campaign had conflicting results. While the percentage of prospective volunteers appeared low, the actual number of individuals willing to work on a committee was high. And, while some financial concerns were identified by many respondents, the study participants provided a long list of potential donors.
- Generally, study participants expressed strong favorable opinions about all aspects of a New London Pride. The fundraising areas were less familiar to interviewees, and some of the concerns that were expressed centered on finances and security.
- The review of fundraising indicated that a substantial amount is needed to support the festival and that there is much competition for the funds from area corporations and businesses. There was hope that some of the major employers would sponsor the event at high levels and that a large quantity of small businesses would support the event at low levels. Most important, the study revealed that leadership is highly committed to diversity and see the project as an opportunity to raise awareness and build community.

- The vast majority of study respondents rated New London Pride Festival favorably. Eighty-nine percent (89%) rated the background statement as “positive” or “very positive.”
- Ninety-five percent (95%) of study participants responded “yes” to attending a Pride Festival in New London. Eighty percent (80%) responded “yes” to attending a Pride Parade. Fifty-three percent (53%) said they would actually march in it. No inquiry or comments were made about the pros and cons of holding a Pride Parade as part of the Pride Festival except that, if held, it should represent the diversity within the GLBTQIA community.
- Respondents had mixed opinions about the GLBTQIA community in Southeastern Connecticut. Forty-six percent (46%) rated their overall experience as “good” and fifty percent (50%) rated it as “fair” or “poor.”
- Opportunities for GLBTQIA persons in the region centered around the gay bars in New London or activities such as Pride Festivals and shows in other cities including Hartford, New Haven, Providence, Northampton, Provincetown, New York and Boston. A few local organizations and social groups were listed as community resources and are listed later in this report.
- Respondents were asked about different constituent groups and to rate what level the groups would support a Pride Festival. Some were clearly defined and others were inconclusive. Below are the results:

CONSTITUENT GROUP	RATED SUPPORT
Gender & Sexual Minorities	High
Colleges & Universities	High
High Schools	Medium
Area Corporations & Businesses	Medium
Public/Community Residents	Medium
Churches & Synagogues	Medium/Low*
City of New London	Inconclusive
Local Philanthropists	Inconclusive
Area Clubs & Services Organizations	Inconclusive
Foundations	Inconclusive

*Repeated comments were made about Churches and Synagogues. They were described as polarized. Open and Affirming congregations would be very supportive while others would be very low.

- Another constituent group that was identified was the military. It was note that there is a large military presence in Southeastern Connecticut, including the Coast Guard Academy, Navy Base, and a defense contractor that is the largest employer in the area.

It was stated that work culture at these places keeps sexual and gender minorities professionally closeted and may inhibit gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and intersex persons from attending a Pride Festival in their own town.

- The planners of large, local events who participated in the study were among the most enthusiastic of all interviewees.
- Interviewees expressed a number of concerns about the campaign: the financial goal, the need for security and safety, the venue, resistance from the city, and the possibility of protests.
- The concept of a campaign and its base requirements tested fairly well. Interviewees indicated that there are many prospective donors for the campaign but that competition within the region is high. Most participants said that they personally would be supportive.
- Fifty (50) individuals were identified by Study participants as potential committee leaders. Of the forty-six (46) individuals that were interviewed, fifteen (15) indicated that they would be willing to accept a leadership position, twenty-four (24) said they were willing to work on a committee, and thirty (30) said they would volunteer at the festival.
- The following table offers an analysis regarding New London Pride Festival’s ability to involve motivated volunteers. While over 50% were willing to work on a committee and volunteer at the festival, only one-third was willing to offer leadership, solicit gifts, or seek vendors and advertisers.

	Yes	No	Maybe
Lead	34%	55%	11%
Solicit	32%	52%	16%
Seek Vendors & Advertisers	32%	45%	23%
Host Fundraising Event	39%	43%	18%
Work on Committee	54%	16%	30%
Volunteer at the Festival	68%	7%	25%

Comment: Based on these data, it appears that New London Pride Festival can recruit a committed cadre of volunteers which, with proper training, organization and stewardship, can be highly effective at maximizing the proposed festival’s success.

- To achieve a \$30,000 campaign goal, experience indicates that approximately seventy percent (70%) of the goal would have to come from gifts of \$500 or more. The following table summarizes potential four-figure donors cited by Study participants (note: some donors were cited at more than one gift level):

Gift Level	Prospects Mentioned
\$5,000+	13
\$1,000+	28
\$500+	18
Lower	9

- Eighty-two percent (82%) of interviewees indicated that they would make a gift to the proposed campaign; yet forty-five percent (45%) considered the festival medium as philanthropic priority.
- Respondents were asked if they would pay specific rates for admission to a Pride Festival. Ninety-three percent (93%) said they would be willing to pay \$1.00-\$5.00, sixty-six percent (66%) said they would pay \$5.00-\$10.00, and only twenty-five percent (25%) said they would pay over \$10.00. Some commented that the event should be free so no one is excluded; others noted that admission rates depended upon entertainment or other benefits such as free food.
- Ninety-one percent (91%) selected downtown New London as the best location for the Pride Festival. Some considered Ocean Beach to be a good location while others mentioned downtown Mystic, Washington Park in Groton, Chelsea Landing in Norwich, Harkness State Park, and college campuses. Most felt that there would be more support from the city and downtown merchants if the festival was held in the District.
- Interviewees offered advice on the campaign and its implementation. The most frequently noted comments were: reduce the financial goal and/or set longer planning period, strengthen and broaden the case, concentrate on leadership gifts and/or obtain a high number of smaller donations, and consider the current challenges in developing the campaign plan.

SUMMARY:

- A positive study for holding a New London Pride Festival and Pride Parade
- Excellent support from individuals, small businesses, and non-profit organizations
- Almost no participation in study from corporations
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer persons particularly supportive
- Fundraising comments were pessimistic but there were also multiple responses suggesting potential lead gifts
- Committed leaders (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender AND straight) willing to assist and organize event
- Some concerns that need to be addressed
- Interviewees recommend that event be held with consideration of regional pride festivals and school calendars

Evaluation:

- The response to the Study indicates that the festival is feasible but would require much planning to overcome financial obstacles and reach a fragmented queer community.
- The potential is substantial. We are encouraged by: (1) the number of four-figure prospects identified during the Study; (2) the number of willing volunteers needed to plan the event; and (3) the positive responses and comments made by the participants about holding such an event.
- The interviewees recommended that the committee be formed immediately if they are to make the one-year planning goal. Some recommended that there be a longer planning period yet others worried about losing momentum.
- It was also recommended that the mission be clear and properly communicated to the public.
- There are a limited amount of resources for sexual and gender minorities in Southeastern Connecticut. The community is also fragmented. A Pride Festival would bridge the “pockets” of queer people and educate the regional population in addition to promoting diversity and pride.
- The Reporter is somewhat confident that a total of \$30,000 can be raised within the next two (2) years from a fundraising campaign. Also, as a result of the campaign, awareness of gender and sexual minorities will become higher. The gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and intersex community will become more visible and united while providing a much needed venue for community building.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Reporter agrees with this advice and would advise that there be more outreach. A critical mass is necessary for a successful event and various members of the community from different constituent groups are required.
- A community planning meeting should be held to form a planning committee. A mission statement and vision of the project should be developed. A decision should also be made whether to hold a Pride Parade. Costs and time must be considered.
- Sub-committees and job descriptions would then be created as part of the strategic goals. The City Council should be approached to inform the public and its constituents about the nature of the festival. Additional outreach would be necessary to solidify the committees.
- The planning committee should create a realistic budget and set the actual fundraising goal. This goal should have four components: corporate sponsorship, small businesses and organizations, advertising and vendors, and fundraising events.
- It is necessary to obtain a fiscal agent in order to get donations and sponsorships.
- Community education and cultivation of major sponsors will be a top priority as it takes much time to establish these relationships in addition to making request deadlines
- Fundraising events, while time-consuming, will also serve as public relations and marketing for the festival. Furthermore, they will provide the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and intersex community with more opportunities.
- The ultimate objective of the campaign is to raise awareness and educate, build community, embrace diversity, create a gay community, and increase economic development.
- A sophisticated leadership gift program should be implemented to include specific strategic approaches to all lead gift prospects and the support of a team of leaders including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and intersex persons as well as allies. The importance of allies in community building is vital to success.
- Challenges to be considered include: volunteers, fundraising, security, community opposition, and queer people in the defense industry.
- Downtown New London as the festival site would encourage the most community support and be the most fitting if a parade was held. However, Ocean Beach is very suitable for an event of this nature and would make an interesting venue for a fundraising event.
- New London Pride Festival should proceed with the campaign as outlined in the feasibility study report and recommendations.

QUESTION: WHAT ARE TOP REASONS FOR HOLDING NEW LONDON PRIDE FESTIVAL?

	STRENGTH	# OF TIMES MENTIONED
1.	Raise Awareness/Promote Visibility	17
2.	Build Community	11
3.	Serve local community/other festivals too far away	7

QUESTION: WOULD YOU ATTEND A PRIDE FESTIVAL IN NEW LONDON?

	Yes	No	Unsure
	95%	2%	5%

QUESTION: WOULD YOU ATTEND OR PARTICIPATE IN A PRIDE PARADE?

	Yes	No	Unsure
Attend/Watch	80%	9%	11%
Participate/March	53%	27%	20%

QUESTIONS: DESCRIBE YOUR OPPORTUNITIES IN SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT AND LIST OTHER ACTIVITIES YOU WOULD LIKE FOR GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, QUEER, QUESTIONING, & INTERSEX PERSONS (GLBTQIA).

LOCAL RESOURCES for GLBTQIA	GLBTQIA Community WANTS
Frank's Place	Film Festival
O'Neill's Brass Rail	Educational Programs
Other GLBTQIA Friends	Music Event/Concert
Alliance for Living	Social Events
F.E.L.L.A.S	Non-bar activities
Mystic Womyn	Community Center
New London Peoples Forum	Youth Events/Scholarship
Alcoholics Anonymous (GLBTQIA meeting)	Poetry Slam
All Souls Unitarian Universalist Congregation	Gay Families
PFLAG (Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays)	Beach Party
T.a.L.L. (Transitioning & Loving Life)	Guerilla/Takeover Nights
Rainbow Alliance, Pfizer Employee Group	Philanthropy (AIDS, Breast Cancer, Women's Center, Elderly, etc.)
Gay-friendly establishments	Book Club
Meetup.com/Internet	Dinner Cruise
W.E.W.O.K (We're Everywhere With Our Kids)	National Coming Out Day event
Local Cable Television Shows	Trips to Theatre/Museums

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS:

INTERVIEW TYPE		CITIES		CONSTITUENT GROUPS		GLBTQIA IDENTIFIED	
Personal	32	Bozrah	1	Banking	1	Gay	11
Phone	9	East Lyme	1	Chamber	2	Lesbian	8
Email	5	Gales					
		Ferry	3	Church	1	Bisexual	4
	46	Total		College	3	Transgender	4
		Groton	2	Corporation	1	Queer	6
		Hampton	1	Event Planner	1	Intersex	0
		Hartford	2	Government	1	Questioning	0
		Ledyard	1	Health/Hospital	1		33
		Mystic	2			23 persons with multiple ID's	
		New		High School	2		
		London	20	Individual	19		
		Niantic	2	Non-Profit	8		
		Norwich	3	Park	1		
		Oakdale	1	Small Business	2		
		Stonington	1	Theatre/Gallery	3		
		Waterford	5				
		Westerly	1		46	Total	
			46	Total			