



Riverside LGBTQ Pride Inc.

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A 501(c)(3) Non Profit Organization

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Riverside LGBTQ+ Pride Elects New Board of Directors

Pride Festival Planned for Sept 3rd 2022

RIVERSIDE, CA - November 18th, 2021 - Following a successful inaugural Pride Picnic this past June, non-profit Riverside LGBTQ+ Pride has elected a new roster to its Board of Directors and is working hard on plans for a 2022 festival.

Newly elected board members include Ray Yu as President, David Giron as Vice President, Christopher Rashidian as Secretary, and Casey Thompson as Treasurer. Other directors elected include Troy Yu as Marketing & Operations Director, Nikki Siangio as Youth Director, and Catherine Garcia and Kyle Freet as Directors at Large. Founding members Sean Maulding and Sean Faustina-Smolak remain on the board as Directors at Large as well.

“When I moved to Riverside years ago, I was not out, but I was looking for my community. I had trouble connecting and difficulty finding community beyond the bar scene,” said Sean Maulding, the founder of the organization. “I wanted an organization to foster networks, educate the public, and raise the visibility of our LGBTQ rainbow.” So, he started one.

Over the next few months, Sean sought others to help organize the first event, a Pride Picnic & Hike held at Riverside’s Ryan Bonaminio Park in June of 2021. Now, the organization is working on plans to hold their first full festival in Downtown Riverside next year.

“Riverside is the most populous city in the Inland Empire and the 12th most populous city in California,” says President Ray Yu. “We need to become a beacon and create safe spaces for our community in Riverside. We need to protect and amplify the voices of our communities, and boost our visibility so we’re not afraid. We need to stand in solidarity with other underrepresented groups, lift each other up and be there for each other.”

Vice President, David Giron added, “[I was] concerned that such a big city didn’t have a pride event. It’s very important for LGBTQ+ members of this community to know that their local neighborhood and representatives support them.”

For co-founder Sean Faustina-Smolak, her intentions were very personal. “I wanted to honor my late brother-in-law who was a beautiful and caring gay man that passed away from AIDS. His parents told him that this was his punishment because he was gay and he didn’t pray hard enough. I chose to become an Ordained Minister so that I could marry anyone, because Love is

Love. I believe that we all need to work together to be able to have the freedom to be ourselves without judgement or persecution.”

As a non-profit organization whose mission is to inspire, educate, commemorate, and celebrate our diverse community in Riverside, the group is working to plan a festival during Labor Day weekend that stands out from other Pride events in the area.

“We want to align ourselves as allies and not competitors to the other Pride festivals of Southern California,” says Operations Director Troy Yu. “Unity, and at the same time, individuality is important to us. Everyone is important to the community. We’re working on an event that provides a unique, fully inclusive experience, alongside all of the other wonderfully important Pride events in Southern California.”

Early plans for the event include the expected festival vendors and entertainment, but also a queer art show and exhibits, a region-wide talent contest, and even spotlight presentations on LGBTQ+ history. The group is also working to include a parade in the festivities. “We’re very early in the planning stage but we’re working with the city to figure out what is practical for 2022.” Troy said.

Part of that work is fundraising. The group is holding their first fundraiser, dubbed *Out & About @ Castle Park* on December 11th, 2021. The event includes unlimited rides and mini-golf at a deep discount off gate prices, and \$10 of every ticket is donated to Riverside LGBTQ+ Pride. If you’d like to attend, you can RSVP on the Riverside Pride website at <http://rivpri.de/OaCP?ref=pr1> . Other fundraisers and promotional events are in the works.

Aside from planning the main event, the organization is focusing on recruiting volunteers, sponsors and partners to help. If you’d like to become involved with their mission, visit <http://rivpri.de/GetInvolved?ref=pr1> to find out how.

Riverside Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Pride, Inc. (aka: “Riverside LGBTQ+ Pride” or “Riverside Pride”) is a volunteer-directed 501(c)(3) non-profit charity working to inspire, educate, commemorate and celebrate our diverse Riverside community. For more information about Riverside LGBTQ+ Pride, contact Troy Yu at (951) 554-0783 or Troy@RiversidePrideIE.org .

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Related Links:

Website: www.RiversidePrideIE.org

Volunteer: <http://rivpri.de/GetInvolved?ref=pr1>

Out & About @ Castle Park: <http://rivpri.de/OaCP?ref=pr1>

Board of Directors: <http://rivpri.de/BoD?ref=pr1>

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