

PINE BARRENS TRIBUNE

1st Annual Medford Pride Festival Welcomes Community, Vendors, Performers and Officials Celebrating LGBTQ+ Pride

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By Ryan Elmore
Staff Writer



Two craftmakers at their arts and crafts table where they encouraged children to make small crafts. Photo By Ryan Elmore



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Wellness Observer

Even though June is nationally recognized as pride month for LGBTQ+ identities, Gailie said July made more sense to host the event.

“We picked mid-July because some of my friends are activists and are extremely busy during the month of June,” Gailie said. “And some of my friends that are drag queens, (June) is their opportunity to make money.”

Gailie told this newspaper she found support from the township in producing the event, namely in Councilman Ray Coxe.

“Pola was kind of the spearhead of (the festival),” Coxe said. “Then when they came to me, I was like, “let’s ramp this thing up a little more.””

As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, Coxe said, the festival was an opportunity for “making people realize that Medford is an inclusive community and welcoming of everyone.”

He noted, “the community is changing, the demographics of the town are changing,” and said he had worked to “get council on board” to host the festival, which had not been done in Medford before.

District 8 Assemblyman Anthony Angelozzi also attended the event, showing his support.

“For Ray (Coxe), planning this event was a big deal,” Angelozzi said.

Angelozzi said that when he was asked to come and support the festival, he said “of course,” before commenting “the world is changing and I think having open celebrations of inclusivity are always a good thing.”





Leslie Hurff, a Medford resident and sign language interpreter, interprets for a band. Photo By Ryan Elmore

Inclusivity was important to Gailie so when Leslie Hurff, an ASL interpreter, reached out and told her she and other volunteers could interpret for speakers and performers, Gailie enthusiastically agreed.

Hurff, who lives in Medford, said she wanted to be involved with the festival because she has children who identify as LGBTQ+. For her, the festival means “I can look around and see the faces that my children will see in the community and feel that this place can be safe for my children.”

In addition to police and EMS services on standby at the event, a handful of “peacekeepers” working with the Transgender Rights Coalition of New Jersey were present. One of the peacekeepers told this newspaper they were there to “de-escalate” should there be confrontations. No serious incidents were reported, they said.

Many local organizations had tents and tables in which they connected with the community, informing them of their organization, including the Burlington County Prosecutor’s Office and the Medford United Methodist Church.

Gailie told this newspaper that she received overwhelmingly positive reactions to the event, having been contacted by individuals who wanted to know how to be involved in the future.

When asked if Medford residents could expect a second Medford Pride Festival next year, Coxé responded, “Absolutely, yes.”





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