

Medford News

Locals plan Medford's first pride festival

By: **EMILY MELVIN** July 2, 2026

Pride Month has come to an end, but the festivities are far from over, thanks to a group of locals who are putting together the first official LGBTQ+ Pride event in town.

Medford Pride Festival is a new family-friendly celebration set to embrace the diversity and inclusivity garnered by the LGBTQ+ community. It is planned to become a free, annual event, with its inaugural festival happening on Wednesday, July 15, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Freedom Park.

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"What we're doing is a universal pride, so it's meant to be a sober, family-oriented event that is inclusive, supportive, accessible, and educational," says Pola Galie, the lead host of the event. Galie is a longtime Medford resident, activist, and co-owner of Lower Forge Brewery on Main Street.

Food trucks, craft vendors, music, art, live entertainment, and interactive activities are planned for the event. Comedians, drag queens, and entertainers will range in style, but all will be family-rated and appropriate for guests of all ages.

Galie is also working to have ASL instructors and interpreters at the event to make it inclusive to the deaf community, as well as ensuring the event is accessible for guests of all abilities.



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Merchants of Historic Medford Village to receive support and approval for a large, public pride festival. Since, she has been working closely with the board to put on the event and ensure all safety, financial, and logistical concerns are accounted for.

"I want to make sure everybody that attends is having a good time and is safe," Galie said.



The Sun/Emily Melvin
Pride banner outside of Lower Forge Brewery on Main Street.

Galie said that Medford has traditionally been a conservative town, and acceptance and celebration of minority communities has come with challenges in town over the years.

Since the opening of her brewery in 2016, which she runs with her son and her daughter in-law, it has become Galie's mission to be a safe-haven for all in town.

"My joke is that everybody is welcome here, except mean people," she said. "Everybody else we could deal with. You could be different, you could be odd, you could be whatever, and we're okay with that. Just just be kind and be fun," she said.

Shortly after the brewery opened, Galie says there were a few incidents where people came to the door and asked if they were welcome or if this was a safe space for them. She recalls a story of a young Black man who asked, "Can I come in?" The encounter took Galie and her family aback.

"We looked at each other, and we were like, 'Why couldn't you? Why couldn't you come into a business?' And he was like, 'well, it's Medford,' and we were totally shocked," she said. "It didn't occur to us that this was still a thing, so we made a decision at that time to be welcoming and inclusive."

Galie also has been adamant about flying a pride flag outside of the brewery year-round. This has



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few years ago, which was important to her as a trans woman. Now, she is a close friend of Galie's and a leader in putting together Medford Pride Festival.

However, Galie's dedication to the LGBTQ+ community has also attracted hate over the years.

"We get messages where they'll tell me if I didn't have a flag outside, I would have more business," she said. "We had an incident during the Black Lives Matter Movement [in 2020] where our pride flag was destroyed, and so was the one at Medford Arts Center up the street."

Despite the negativity, Galie continues to stand true to her beliefs, hangs her flag, and celebrates those who may feel otherwise overlooked. And this same passion is the driving force behind Medford Pride Festival.



The Sun/Emily Melvin
Pride flags and American flags on display throughout Lower Forge Brewery on Main Street.



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