

ARIZONA REPUBLIC

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VALLEY & STATE

2018 PULITZER PRIZE WINNER

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NATIONAL LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES, GAME 6
DIAMONDBACKS 5, PHILLIES 1 (SERIES TIED AT 3)

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR
Hamas frees two additional hostages
US urges delay of likely Gaza ground offensive
By Robert and Jorge A. Cortes

BACK-TO-BATS PUSH A FINALE
Diamondbacks force Game 7 against Phillies
By Megan Mendoza

Misinformation about US-Mexico border spreading on social media
By Megan Mendoza

Parade caps off Phoenix Pride
Estimated 3,000 participate in parade, while tens of thousands attend weekend festival at Steele-Indian School Park, 3A



The 2023 Phoenix Pride Parade takes place on Third Street in downtown Phoenix on Sunday morning. MEGAN MENDOZA/THE REPUBLIC

Phoenix Pride helps community connect

Welcoming atmosphere at parade, 2-day festival

Audrey Eagerton
Arizona Republic
USA TODAY NETWORK

For Christine Snyder, Phoenix Pride's annual festival is about community and coming together as a family. Sunday's celebration began at 10 a.m. with a parade starting on Third Street and Thomas Road, making its way north to Steele-Indian School Park, where the festival opened at noon. Before the festival began, Snyder stood in front of a group protesting the parade near the park entrance on Third Street and Indian School Road, shouting her own beliefs and welcoming other paradegoers. Snyder moved to Phoenix two years ago from Chicago and wanted to remain involved in the LGBTQ community to support her family and everyone out at the event. "Pride is very big there [in Chicago] and I wanted to be a part of it in Phoenix. Here it seems to have more of a family



Ricardo Camacho at the Phoenix Pride Festival at Steele-Indian School Park on Sunday. NICOLE MULLEN/THE REPUBLIC

kind of atmosphere ... it feels more intimate and I'm proud to be celebrating with likeminded people that accept everyone," Snyder said. While it might feel more intimate, the parade had around 3,000 participants with hundreds of entrance floats and vehicles, according to Jeremy Helfgot, See PRIDE, Page 10A



Attendees at the Phoenix Pride Festival on Sunday; over the weekend, it was expected to attract 50,000 people. NICOLE MULLEN/THE REPUBLIC

Pride

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who runs communications on behalf of Phoenix Pride.

Throughout the weekend, 50,000 people were expected in total at the Phoenix Pride festival, but that family atmosphere is still alive, said Helfgot.

“Phoenix is an interesting place because the Valley is so spread out and there isn’t really a gay neighborhood per se, not like in other places,” Helfgot said.

Helfgot acknowledged the smaller pockets of LGBTQ-inclusive areas in Phoenix, such as the Melrose District, which spans Seventh Avenue from Indian School Road to Camelback Road in Central Phoenix, and is known for its high concentration of LGBTQ nightlife within a 1-mile stretch.

“Because there isn’t a geographic space, the connection in the metaphysical sense becomes even stronger ... community isn’t tied to one place, it’s something bigger than that. That’s why, when compared to other cities — Phoenix has a different feeling.”

Within the festival gates, performers took the stage and several local businesses set up booths throughout the park.

One of those booths was occupied by Drag Story Hour Arizona, a nonprofit organization that focuses on diversity and inclusivity in early literacy throughout Arizona. Michelle Miranda-Thorstand, also known as Ms. Michelle when she’s performing, is the executive director of the organization.

During a drag story hour performance, she mentioned the way kids’

eyes will light up at the sparkly costumes or how, for the first time, they’ll see someone who reflects themselves or their family.

“A lot of our young readers might not be your typical heteronormative child, they might have parents who are part of the LGBTQ+ community, they might have different gender expression, so when they see our story tellers and see that it’s not just the ridged binary—they get really excited,” Miranda-Thorstand said.

Drag Story Hour Arizona focuses on drag art and performances that are suitable for all ages, and they take care to have all of their performers do background checks. Their primary goal is to make sure that young readers are engaged in literacy and that they can imagine a world where they can be their authentic selves.

Among the booths and exhibits, other members of the community continued to raise their signs from the parade. One of the signs held by Christine Severance read: “If your parents don’t accept you, I’m your new mom.”

Severance came out to support her daughter who has participated in one in ten, an organization that serves LGBTQ youth throughout Arizona, and their walk in the parade.

“I get a lot off attention holding this at pride parades because a lot of people get left out in the cold by their families. It breaks my heart and I am happy to provide support for anybody in the queer community,” Severance said.

“The community in Phoenix is definitely widespread, but that’s why I love coming to events like this, because it’s like this pocket or bubble of acceptance and equality.”