

OUR PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Programs

Community Partner Fund

In western North Carolina, we are blessed by many local organizations and groups that want to support and welcome our community. Unfortunately, their tiny scale and rural isolation can make it difficult for them to raise funds and for local donors to find them.

We established the Blue Ridge Pride Community Partner Fund to address this need. All monies donated to this fund are set aside for local groups that demonstrably support western North Carolina's LGBTQ and allied communities. In 2020, the fund donated \$12,000 to a variety of COVID-19 relief funds. In 2019, the fund's first year, it provided local organizations with \$7,500 in funding.

The goal of the fund is threefold:

- Make it easy for qualifying organizations – especially small ones – to apply for financial support.
- Make it easy for local donors to support a greater variety of local groups and services.
- Create a sense of shared community and a greater awareness of all the groups that support us.

We maintain a public posting of grants awarded. We are starting small, but we hope to see this program grow considerably.

Our sponsors have found creative ways to support this program. Green Man Brewery committed all profits from one of its brands, LUV ALL, to the fund. The Aloft Asheville Downtown and Fine Arts Theatre collaborated to support the fund through the Movie and Mixer Series. We welcome other creative partnerships.

Generation Plus

Generation Plus (GP) seeks to enrich the lives of LGBTQ+ and allied community adults in Western North Carolina who are living life's third act: the years beyond fifty. Aging in rural LGBTQIA+ communities pose unique opportunities and challenges. GP seeks to leverage the power of community by connecting community members and area service partners.

Generation Plus builds on a rich network and legacy created by the WNC LGBTQ Elders and Land of Sky. We are fortunate to have the AARP of WNC, Land of Sky, Council on Aging, Buncombe County Health and Human Services and other partners join us in this exciting program. We believe that our community is strongest when we stand together.



Community-Building Events & Partnerships

Blue Ridge Pride was founded in 2009 with the production of our first annual festival. While the festival remains core to our mission, we have expanded into other events.

Public events play a crucial role in society. They can unite or segregate. They can foster confrontation or encourage reconciliation. We believe that, as the world grows smaller, it is critical that we learn to share space and to welcome our differences.

We seek to create shared spaces that are welcoming to all. We seek to foster dialogues that are honest and challenging, but respectful and constructive. It's a fine line to walk, but we believe that it is worth the effort. Your sponsorship dollars support events like the following.

- **Blue Ridge Pride Festival** – Our annual, family-friendly fall celebration of WNC's LGBTQ community and our wonderful allies. This event, which typically attracts 14,000 to 18,000 people, is more than a celebration. For a day, health care providers, community service groups, and activists share space with corporations, merchants, and artists. The festival models a welcoming community in action.



- **Welcoming WNC Procession** – This is a parade of people rather than floats. There are no sponsors or grand marshals – just people and organizations walking to give voice and visibility to all who aspire to a western North Carolina that is welcoming and equitable to all.
- **Mx Pride Pageant** – This annual pageant offers an opportunity to showcase people who explore and express gendered identity in all its wonderful forms. Rather than compete in gendered categories, the contestants come together in an open field that defies conventional boundaries.
- **Local Collaborations** – We have worked with a variety of local organizations, to bring both fun and funding to the community. In 2019, we launched a summer Movie & Mixer film series in partnership with the Fine Arts Theatre and the Aloft Asheville Downtown. The \$7,000 in proceeds from the series helped to launch the Community Partner Fund. Green Man Brewery crafted a special brew, LUV ALL, and donated all of the profits to Fund. Banks Avenue, O’Henrys, New Belgium Brewery, and Mountain Xpress have supported our programs with other creative events and programs.



Projects

WNC LGBTQ Oral History Project

The LGBTQ Oral History Archive project is a collaboration of the Blue Ridge Pride Center and UNC Asheville, with generous seed funding from the YMCA of Western NC. We aim to document a richer, fuller, and more inclusive history of our region by recording the stories and memories of people in our community. To date, we have captured over 60 lives. In the future, we plan to capture the history of some of our more storied LGBTQ organizations and events.



Emerging Programs

WNC LGBTQ+ Community Directory

The classic urban solution to LGBTQ community-building is a brick-and-mortar Center. But rural LGBTQ communities face a unique set of issues that render this conventional, big-city solution less effective. Many of the neediest in our community live far from a large town center. Meanwhile, most rural community service organizations lack the scale and infrastructure to reach the people who need them.

We are launching a virtual community center to address these issues. It will feature a variety of directories intended to better connect our community to supporting groups, organizations, and services.

Blue Ridge Pride LGBTQ+ Business Alliance

Businesses are vital to our community. They create jobs and opportunities. We are engaged in discussions with local business leaders about the creation of an alliance to support business efforts to advance equity and inclusion in our community. While we remain focused on serving the LGBTQ+ community, we are seeking to partner to ensure that this effort fosters equity and inclusion for all.



Contacts

Business Alliance, Community Directory
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 Community Events

David Perry, dperry@BlueRidgePride.org
 Butch Thompson, bthompson@BlueRidgePride.org
 Dr. Amanda Wray, AWray@BlueRidgePride.org
 Butch Thompson, bthompson@BlueRidgePride.org
 Tina White, TWhite@BlueRidgePride.org