



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **BIG Things in Store for Pocono PRIDE Fest 2024!**

First Ever Awards Ceremony and Kickoff Celebration to Honor Those Who Made Positive Contributions to the LGBTQ+ Community

**THE POCONOS, PA** – The newly formed Pocono PRIDE Coalition – an outgrowth of the popular Pocono PRIDE Festival – invites all to celebrate the start of Pride Month at the first ever PRIDE Fest Kickoff and Champions of Pride Awards Ceremony to be held at Mount Airy Casino Resort on Friday, May 31, from 6 to 8 p.m.

The event promises to be a night of inspiration and commemoration, bringing together Pocono LGBTQ+ activists, allies and supporters from all walks of life.

The Champions of Pride Awards Ceremony will recognize the region's stellar LGBTQ+ and Ally business owners, professionals and community leaders whose work and dedication empower and unite LGBTQ+ and allied people through their leadership, service and support.

The Pocono Pride Coalition is proud to announce this year's inaugural 2024 awardees to be honored at the event:

- **Person of the Year:** Corinne Goodwin, Executive Director and founder of Eastern PA Trans Equity Project, Person of the Year
- **Business of the Year:** Camp Out Poconos
- **Ally of the Year:** Mount Airy Casino Resort/Mount Airy Foundation

“This event is about celebrating and supporting the LGBTQ+ community locally and across the entire Pocono Mountains Region,” **said Benny Vukaj, Co-Founder of the Pocono PRIDE Festival and Board President of the Pocono PRIDE Coalition.** “We couldn't be prouder to welcome and honor those champions among us who foster and promote acceptance and inclusion.”

Tickets for the 21-and-over event are \$20 and include light fare and musical performances by [Rebel Stages](#), the Monroe County-based Visual and Performing Arts Center, under the direction of Brandon Hanks. A cash bar will also be available.

Advance tickets for the awards ceremony and kickoff party are required and are now on sale at [MountAiryCasino.com](#).

“Supporting our neighbors has always been an important component of Mount Airy Casino Resort,” **said Lisa DeNaples, owner and managing trustee of Mount Airy Casino Resort and the Mount Airy Foundation,** which selected the Pocono Pride Coalition as a \$10,000 grant recipient this year. “I’m especially proud of our commitment to nonprofits in the surrounding community and in our efforts to ensure our giving impacts all people from all walks of life.”

“Mount Airy Casino Resort is excited to host the first ever Champions of Pride Awards Ceremony and honored to receive the Ally of the Year Award from the Pocono Pride Coalition,” **said Ben Koff, Mount Airy COO and General Manager.** “In addition to providing financial support, this recognition is also a reflection of our organization’s steadfast commitment to building a more vibrant and inclusive workforce.”

“We could not feel more honored to receive this recognition. Our team is always striving to maintain a welcoming environment at camp, but we are also vastly inspired by our community of campers, a group of people who proudly join us in our mission to further unite the Poconos,” **said Camp Out Poconos Director Steve Loudon.** “Camp Out looks forward to a bright future for the greater Pocono community and will work tirelessly to strengthen those bonds.”

“I am very grateful for this recognition – not only for myself, but for our wonderful Board of Directors and our amazing volunteers,” **said Corinne Goodwin, Executive Director of Eastern PA Trans Equity Project.** “We couldn’t do this work without them, nor could we do it without the support of great community organizations like The Pocono PRIDE Coalition.”

The actual 2024 Pocono PRIDE Festival will be Sunday, June 2, on Courthouse Square in Stroudsburg. On Saturday, June 1, Camp Out Poconos will host a series of events at their location, 446 Mt. Nebo Road, East Stroudsburg. A full entertainment and events lineup for the entire Pocono PRIDE Festival weekend will be announced on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Now in its fourth year, this celebration of inclusion and empowerment in the heart of the Pocono Mountains will feature music and live entertainment on two stages, craft vendors, children's activities, food trucks and so much more. Local drag Kings/Queens and DJ's will provide all-day entertainment and resource tables will be available for those seeking information and resources for staying safe and well. For more information on Pocono PRIDE Fest, visit [PoconoPrideFestival.com](http://PoconoPrideFestival.com).

Looking to get involved in this year's festivities? Sponsorship, volunteer and advertisement opportunities are open to corporations, community groups and individuals. Organizers are currently seeking raffle baskets, which can be donated by contacting the festival organizing committee at [PoconoPrideFestival@gmail.com](mailto:PoconoPrideFestival@gmail.com).

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### **About Pocono Pride Festival & Coalition**

The Pocono PRIDE Festival, now entering its fourth year, has grown exponentially, highlighting the need for a permanent home for this ever-growing event. Thus, the inception of the Pocono PRIDE Coalition emerged, serving not only as a logistical hub for organizing such a significant gathering but also as a vital conduit for ongoing support and resources for the LGBTQ+ Community across the Pocono Mountains Region. In collaboration with the Community Foundation of Monroe County, a Non-Profit 501(c)(3), the Pocono PRIDE Coalition Fund was established, providing a platform to receive donations and sponsorships. Contributors to the fund enjoy the benefit of tax deductions on their contributions, fostering community involvement and support. Furthermore, the Pocono PRIDE Coalition operates as an established Non-Profit 501(c)(4), extending its reach beyond the confines of the annual festival. This designation enables sustained efforts in advocacy, resource provision, and community engagement throughout the year, amplifying the impact of its mission.

### **About Eastern PA Trans Equity Project**

The Eastern PA Trans Equity Project is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to empowering transgender Pennsylvanians located in Eastern Pennsylvania. We offer transgender legal name change services, support groups, financial aid services, and other programming. Our transgender service programs are available to residents of thirty-three (33) Pennsylvania counties. These include Lehigh, Northampton, Monroe, Montgomery, Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lancaster, Luzerne, Lackawanna, Wayne, Pike, Carbon, Columbia, Schuylkill, Bradford, Wyoming, Montour, Northumberland, Lebanon,

Sullivan, Tioga, Susquehanna, Lycoming, Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Juniata, Perry, Snyder, Union, and York County in Pennsylvania. Our programs empower transgender Pennsylvanians so that they can do more than survive... Instead, they can thrive!

### **About Camp Out Poconos**

Established in 2022, Camp Out Poconos is a premier camping resort nestled in the picturesque Pocono Mountains, just 90 minutes from New York City and Philadelphia. As a vibrant sanctuary for LGBTQ+ adults, our campground celebrates inclusivity and diversity, providing a safe and welcoming environment for all guests. Camp Out Poconos offers a variety of accommodations, from traditional tent sites to luxurious cabins and cottages, catering to a range of preferences and comfort levels. Our amenities are designed to cater to a wide range of interests and include lively pool parties, a cozy piano lounge, bonfires, food truck, and a diverse calendar of events that provides something for everyone. Camp Out Poconos proudly sponsors events like the Pocono Pride Fest, reinforcing our commitment to active participation in the LGBTQ+ community and fostering a supportive and engaging environment where everyone feels at home.

### **About Mount Airy Casino Resort**

Mount Airy Casino Resort boasts the ultimate gaming experience with nearly 1,700 slot machines, 80 table games and the all-new Sports Book, a multi-media, luxury sports betting lounge. As Pennsylvania's first AAA Four Diamond-rated casino and one of USA Today's Top 10 Casino Hotels in the country, this premier, adults-only escape offers nearly 300 upscale guest rooms and luxury suites, complemented by over 20,000-square-foot of convention center and ballroom space that serve as a state-of-the-art venue for private and corporate events, weddings and entertainment. Guests can discover a variety of signature restaurant options, including Guy Fieri's Mt. Pocono Kitchen and the award-winning Bistecca by Il Mulino. This all-encompassing, full-service resort destination for outdoor enthusiasts and gaming enthusiasts alike features a Sports Illustrated-recognized lakefront, 18-hole golf course; a 16,000-square foot spa, salon and exercise facility; and a newly renovated luxury indoor/outdoor pool complex. Mount Airy Casino Resort is less than 90 minutes from Philadelphia, New York City and northern New Jersey. For reservations, call 1-877-682-4791 or visit [www.mountairycasino.com](http://www.mountairycasino.com).

### **About the Mount Airy Foundation**

The Mount Airy Foundation, the charitable arm of Mount Airy Casino Resort, was established in 2007 with the purpose of making contributions in Monroe County for the benefit of the local community. Since its inception, the Mount Airy Foundation has donated more than \$1 million in cash grants, in-kind and merchandise donations, and corporate sponsorships to nonprofit organizations throughout Northeast Pennsylvania including East Stroudsburg University, Keystone College, Johnson College, the Salvation Army of East Stroudsburg, Northampton Community College, Monroe County Meals on Wheels, Pocono Center for the Arts, Pocono Family YMCA, Pocono Mountains United Way, Monroe County Habitat for Humanity, Boy Scouts of America, Monroe County, AllOne Charities, Make A Wish of Greater Pennsylvania, Pocono Health Foundation, and East Stroudsburg Lodge No. 319.