

Pride Week 2014



**Rainbow Flag Raising
in Yonker's NY**

This past week the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) community and their allies celebrated Gay Pride throughout the country. On Monday, June 23, 2014, located nearby in Yonkers, NY, Mayor Mike Spano proclaimed that last week was Gay Pride Week in Yonkers and proceeded to raise a rainbow flag in front of City Hall—a historic event for the local community. About 50 people attended the flag raising ceremony, myself included and we are all hopeful that the flag raising will become an annual event to show support of our local LGBTQ community.



Yonkers' Mayor, Mike Spano Delivering Proclamation

Following this historic and exciting event, the 19th Annual Gay Prom took place across the street at the Grand Roosevelt Ballroom on Friday, June 27, 2014. Westchester Jewish Community Services' (WJCS) very own, Center Lane hosted the annual prom with first-time co-sponsor, Pride Works. Center Lane is the only program in Westchester County dedicated to LGBTQ youth, ages 13-21 living in and around Westchester County, NY. This year's theme was "Fairytales" and the youth as well as several volunteers, Center Lane Staff, and WJCS



Center Lane Staff and WJCS Executive Staff



Center Lane's Gay Prom Volunteers

executive staff attendees participated by dressing in costume. There were many princess crowns, rainbow ribbons, and fairy wings worn during the evening. The ballroom was decked out in fairy decorations, which included fairy garden centerpieces on each table. The biggest hit of the night was the photo booth

where all attendees had the opportunity to take photographs in front of a very colorful background and use props to enhance their photography session. The youth took

advantage of the opportunity to show their pride and excitement with their friends by using signs that read “#gayprom”, “Gay Prom 2014”, “LOL”, and “#selfie”. The prom was well received by everyone that attended and everyone looks forward to next year’s 20th anniversary.

The prom was just one of the events Center Lane’s staff and youth attended this past weekend. Yesterday was the Gay Pride March in New York City. The Gay Pride March is an annual event that begins in Midtown Manhattan and ends on Christopher Street in Downtown, Manhattan, passing the Stonewall Inn, where the events that took place 45 years ago on June 28, 1969 is the reason why we march.

This year’s march brought over a million people to show their pride and/or support for the LGBTQ community, not including the hundreds of organizations, major companies, and celebrities that proudly marched down 5th

Avenue. There was a sea of rainbow flags and men and women dressed up in rainbow costumes carrying banners, flags, buttons, and stickers.

The Center Lane youth, staff, and volunteers marched with pride and were greeted by march-goers with cheering and hollering. It was a surreal experience to receive all of that support and recognition by so many people. The youth were really excited to participate in such an important and celebrated occurrence. They ran around the street giving high-fives and handshakes to people alongside the march-route.

Although a very tiring weekend, the work that went into the festivities was worth it. The smiles, laughter, and pride by everyone makes us look forward to next June. Happy Pride!



My Husband (left) and I (right) at the 2014 NYC Pride March

Mark Portnoy, FFTA Caseworker