

LOCAL

PGN announces 49 Most Influential LGBTQ+ Leaders for 2025



by PGN Staff

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As Philadelphia Gay News (PGN) celebrates its 49th anniversary, we are honored to present the 49 Most Influential LGBTQ+ Leaders of 2025. This year's list shines a light on individuals whose work continues to shape the future of our community in profound and lasting ways. From those protecting our health to artists who move us, from youth activists to seasoned trailblazers, these honorees represent the wide spectrum of leadership that defines LGBTQ+ Philadelphia.

The annual recognition reflects PGN's ongoing mission to elevate voices, celebrate achievements and honor those who ensure our community thrives. Each anniversary year brings with it a growing roster of honorees, and for 2025, we are proud to recognize 49 leaders whose impact spans generations, fields and movements.

Their efforts in advocacy, creativity, health, visibility and more underscore the resilience and brilliance of the LGBTQ+ community.

In addition to being celebrated at a special event on Oct. 10 at the historic Arch Street Meeting House, each honoree will be profiled in a commemorative edition of PGN, released during OURFest and National Coming Out Day.

This year's list is organized into categories that reflect the many ways leadership manifests in our community:

Generational Leaders

Celebrating leaders whose impact bridges generations, from trailblazing elders to rising youth voices.

- **Michael Byrne** — Mobile Therapist for Older Adults at Jewish Family and Children Services
- **Jason Landau Goodman** — Board Chair for the Pennsylvania Youth Congress
- **Jasper Liem** — Executive Director of The Attic Youth Center
- **Linda Marucci** — Co-chair of the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging's LGBTQ+ Advisory Council
- **Tim McKinney, MSW, LSW** — LGBTQ+ Coordinator for the School District of Philadelphia
- **Malaya Ulan** — Philadelphia's Youth Poet Laureate
- **Heshie Zinman** — Chair of LGBT Elder Initiative

Health Care Heroes

Honoring those dedicated to improving LGBTQ+ health, mental health and overall well-being.

- **Jaulie "Joy" Cantave** — Health and Wellness Coordinator for Colours
- **Dr. Michael Danielewicz** — Director, Pride at the Jefferson Center for Healthy Aging

- **Priy Jindal, CRNP-BC AAHIVS** — Clinical Lead of ACG Health’s Mosaic Medical Program
- **Dr. Kevin Kline** — Medical Director for LGBTQ+ Health at Penn Medicine
- **Justin Mendoza** — Clinical Social Worker/Therapist
- **Andrea Rashbaum** — Co-founder of Parents of Trans and Gender Expansive Kids (PTK) Delaware
- **Erica Smith** — Sexual Health Expert and Author

Creators and Entertainers

Recognizing artists and entertainers who inspire through performance, storytelling and creativity.

- **Henlo Bullfrog** — Drag Performer, “King of Drag” Finalist
- **Robert Drake** — DJ
- **Brandon Edelman (Bran Flakezz)** — Content Creator
- **Sheena C. Howard** — Award-winning Author, Filmmaker and Scholar
- **Shawna Lutzow** — Founder of Lady Laughs Philly
- **Brittany Lynn** — Drag Performer
- **Ziphina** — Producer of The Naughty Jawn and the Philly Performer Directory

Trans Rights Warriors

Acknowledging those who advance equality and justice for transgender and nonbinary communities.

- **Hazel Edwards** — Acting Executive Director of Galaei
- **AJ Freno** — Senior Manager of Support Programs at HiTOPS

- **Sappho Fulton** — Executive Director of Womxn Beyond Borders
- **Martha Madrigal** — Co-Founder of TransFormation Collective
- **Dr. Darius McLean** — Interim Executive Director of William Way LGBT Community Center
- **Naiymah Sanchez** — Senior Organizer with the ACLU of Pennsylvania
- **Elizabeth Coffey Williams** — Trans Activist

Community Organizers

Highlighting activists whose grassroots efforts strengthen and unite the LGBTQ+ community.

- **Jazmyn Henderson** — Activist
- **Reverend Jeffrey H. Jordan** — Senior Pastor of Whosoever Metropolitan Community Church
- **Christina Kallas-Saritsoglou** — Co-Founder/Manager at Philly AIDS Thrift
- **Asa Khalif** — Black Lives Matter activist/organizer, Member of the District Attorney's Office LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee
- **Deej McCoy** — Disability Rights Advocate
- **Tami Sortman** — President of Washington Square West Civics Association
- **Liz Weissert** — President of Philadelphia's LGBTQ Bar Association

Community Visibility

Applauding individuals who champion representation and visibility for LGBTQ+ people everywhere.

- **Sheila Alexander-Reid** — Executive Director of PHL Diversity

- **John Brady** — Political Director of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Democratic Parties
- **Bill Egan** — Program Director for PhillyPride365's Pride Across the City
- **Laura Giles** — Vice President of the Philadelphia Falcons and Project Manager for Pride House Philadelphia
- **Rebecca Kenton** — Founder of Sip City Mixer
- **Michael Newmuis** — 2026 Director in the Mayor's Office of Philadelphia
- **Sophia Schiaroli** — Creator of Gay Girls+ and Cherry Social

Game Changers

Paying tribute to those breaking barriers and pushing for LGBTQ+ inclusion in sports.

- **Chivonn Anderson** — Owner of Marsha's
- **Susie Cirilli** — Founder of Cirilli, LLC
- **Josh Fernandez** — Director of Queer Run Philly
- **Jennifer Leary** — Founder of Watch Party PHL
- **Winter Parts** — Runner and Advocate
- **Kate Scott** — Play-By-Play Announcer for the Philadelphia 76ers
- **Jordan Toy** — Commissioner and Board Chair of Stonewall Sports

The 49 Most Influential LGBTQ+ Leaders celebration highlights the breadth, talent and impact of Philadelphia's LGBTQ+ community. It is an evening dedicated to honoring the voices that continue to lead, inspire and drive meaningful change. By recognizing these honorees, PGN proudly renews its commitment to amplifying and supporting LGBTQ+ leadership.

As PGN reaches its 49th anniversary, we invite community members, allies and partners to join us on Oct. 10, 2025, at the historic Arch Street Meeting House. A limited number of tickets are available through [Eventbrite](#).

Together, we will honor the achievements of this year's most influential leaders and look ahead to a future filled with progress, resilience and possibility.

For sponsorship opportunities, event details or information about the honorees, please contact PGN Publisher Mark Segal at mark@epgn.com.

Join us as we celebrate the changemakers shaping the future of LGBTQ+ Philadelphia!