



(FIRST EVER!)

IMPACT REPORT 2024-2025



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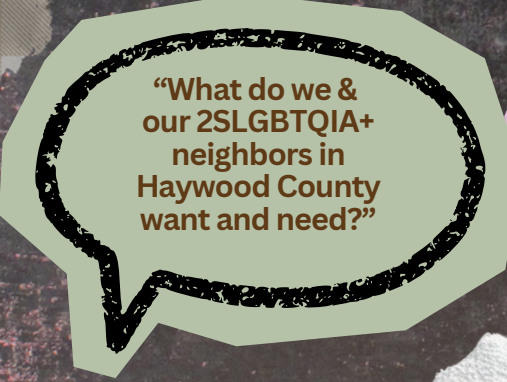
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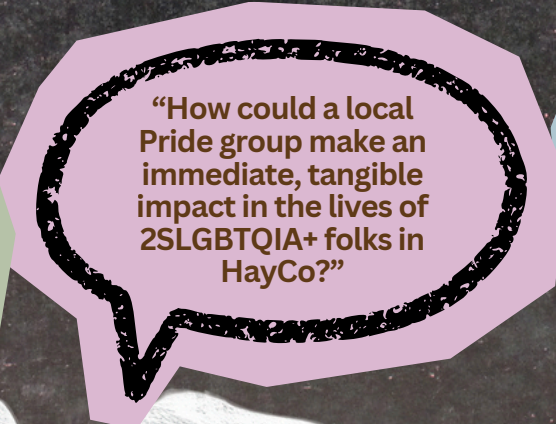


INTRODUCING HAYWOOD COUNTY PRIDE: OUR ORIGIN STORY

In 2024, Haywood County Pride was planted as a seed through a series of conversations that took place between January and March. Community members came together to discuss the concept of a local pride organization, asking questions of ourselves and each other...



“What do we & our 2SLGBTQIA+ neighbors in Haywood County want and need?”




“How could a local Pride group make an immediate, tangible impact in the lives of 2SLGBTQIA+ folks in HayCo?”



“What is our shared vision for a local Pride group?”

The conclusion we came to is that **we are all hungry for a collective vehicle to lift up our shared truth, history, and culture as 2SLGBTQIA+ Appalachians, and to reclaim our right to community care as we struggle for survival in times of ever-increasing uncertainty.**

And so it was that HayCo Pride was born as a project of shared survival; an extension of a legacy of Pride Movements that date back all the way to Stonewall. From the earliest days of forming this collective, we have sought to honor our ancestors in this movement, recognizing that—from Christopher Street Liberation Day to the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power—Pride is a refusal of silence and a reclamation of dignity. **HayCo Pride, like those generations of Pride collectives before us, was born from resistance to state violence and erasure.**



We planted the seed of HayCo Pride with the knowledge that the roots of the Pride Movement reach so much deeper than pageantry or branding, connecting us to survival, weaving networks of collective care like mycelium. **Like the roots the Balsam Fir Tree, the roots of our Pride serve as the anchor** that both situates us in time and place—unwaveringly insistent that **Queer and Trans+ people have always been a part of our community**—and provides stability and resiliency for us to grow and take up the space we deserve to live openly, safely, and with joy.



The roots of resistance are especially deep here in Appalachia. Appalachia itself is often looked on by outsiders as a “queer” place, frequently misunderstood, with a history full of examples of state violence and oppression that have been all but erased from public knowledge. Appalachian Queer and Trans+ folks have been finding one another, protecting one another, and creating refuge for generations.

The seed of HayCo Pride was planted to honor our lineage as living practice, to exist at and center the intersections of Appalachian and queer cultures.



In April of 2024, “Haywood County Pride” was officially incorporated as a nonprofit entity and we began planning our big launch event: the Queer Culture Celebration to take place on the first weekend in October. In June, we were granted 501c(3) tax exempt status and we were moving full-steam ahead.

APRIL 2024: DECIDING TO INCORPORATE AS A NONPROFIT!

After six months of planning and coordination, we abruptly had to cancel the QCC in the wake of Hurricane Helene.

As is the case with many moments in queer history, what could have been an ending instead became a beginning. As 2024 came to an end, we were able to leverage the relationships and mutual aid framework we developed in the months prior to Helene, mobilizing them to serve some of our most vulnerable community members in the midst of catastrophe.

2025 brought us into our first full year of existence after the turbulence and uncertainty that closed out 2024; with the new year came immense growth and grounding. Together, we nurtured community safety nets where none existed. **We reclaimed space in every crack that we could find to fit into.** We chose joy as resistance. We built relationships strong enough to hold fear, uncertainty, grief, and hope all at once.

All of this took place even while **2025 unfolded in a national context marked by escalating attacks on 2SLGBTQIA+ lives—especially Trans+ lives—through legislation, disinformation, and cultural warfare.** Despite the progress that has been made in queer and trans advocacy over the past decades, these last 12 months have demonstrated with profound clarity that rights on paper do not guarantee safety in practice. In moments like the current one, **local community is the key to our survival.**



OUR “QUEER AS FOLK” BENEFIT CONCERT RAISED OVER \$300 FOR MUTUAL AID FOR HURRICANE HELENE SURVIVORS!

HayCo Pride was planted as a seed with a vision for harvesting a solution to this reality: a living, breathing network of neighbors, volunteers, partners, elders, youth, and chosen family who believe that **Liberation is something we build together.** Every act of mutual aid, every gathering, every shared story, every moment of care is part of a larger commitment to solidarity and co-creating a future where we can all thrive.

The ground is thawing once again, and HayCo Pride—no longer a seed—is beginning to stretch its leaves in preparation to grow into the year ahead. As a collective, we’re entering this year stronger than we were going into 2024—with deeper relationships, more shared resources to lean on, and an infrastructure for material and emotional support to navigate whatever may come our way.

We offer this Impact Report as a reflection on what we have been able to build together in our first year, even when faced with unexpected (literal!) disasters; in recognition of what is possible when we show up for one another; and as an invitation for our neighbors to join us as collaborators in this work of co-creating community and Liberation.

With love and solidarity,
Your Friends at HayCo Pride

YEAR AT A GLANCE

JANUARY TO FEBRUARY

As we entered 2025, we were still hurting from Hurricane Helene alongside the rest of our community as we turned our focus towards facilitating healing through the distribution of funds and supplies.



UNLOADING MATTRESSES FOR OUR ELDERLY!

We received our first foundation grant from John Prine's "Hello In There" Foundation, launched a mini-grant program that **shared \$3,250 in mutual aid funds with 18 queer and trans+ households** in Western North Carolina, and we signed the lease for what would become our Little Free Queer Store.



OUR FRIENDS WITH RALEIGH UNITED MUTUAL AID HUB DROPPED OFF A TRUCKLOAD OF SUPPLIES!

SPRING

As wildfires tore through our region, fueled by Hurricane debris, we **built and delivered air purifiers** to neighbors impacted by the smoke, and we launched **exciting new programs like YoGay with Yoga DiVita and the inaugural HayQueer Hike.**

We held our first-ever Really, Really Free Market on the Spring Equinox **welcoming over 60 households** and hundreds of individuals to share what they had and take what they needed.

The Free Market kicked off our **Little Free Queer Store** as an ongoing mutual aid hub. Through the labor and love of volunteers, the Free Store expanded accessibility to **17 weekly open hours across five days of the week.**

BUILDING & DISTRIBUTING DIY AIR PURIFIERS TO COPE WITH THE SMOKE



REALLY, REALLY FREE MARKET

SUMMER

We also published our first zine and set up cooling stations around town with partners like The Funky Fern, to help our neighbors in beat the heat, all while transitioning out of the Little Free Queer Store space and launching a fundraiser for an enclosed trailer to take our mutual aid efforts on the go.



THE CREW AT TRANS+ PRIDE

We had a blast weaving “the strings that bind us” and meeting all kinds of neighbors from near and far at the **Smoky Mountains Bluegrass Festival** in October. We got to show off our creativity and commitment to cultural reconnection with **art projects highlighting our Appalachian heritage and connection across differences**. Shortly after, we launched the Trans+ support group in response to community requests.

“THE STRINGS THAT BIND US” COMMUNITY ART PROJECT AT THE SMOKY MOUNTAIN BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL



The “dog days” were action-packed, as we participated in four separate Pride events across the region:

Hendersonville Pride, Nerd Pride Fest, the first-ever Trans+ Pride in Asheville, and our local Pride on Main Parade.

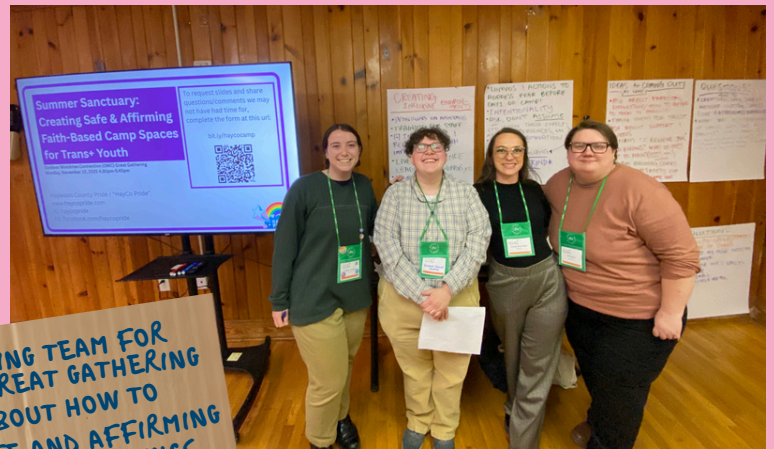
Pride month was all about showing out to show up for each other during extreme heat – for POM, we adapted our parade contingency to be inclusive for neighbors with mobility limitations and partnered with SeekHealing to offer a cooling station during the event.

JUST A FEW OF OUR FOLKS WHO ROLLED THROUGH AT PRIDE ON MAIN!



FALL & WINTER

As the harvest season unrolled, we truly saw the fruits of our labor! We were asked to teach a **workshop for faith-based summer camp leaders on creating safe and affirming spaces for Trans+ campers**. Unexpectedly, we partnered with **Pattie Gonia** for an opportunity to connect over the intersections of rural Queer and environmental advocacy during her visit to Asheville.



OUR TRAINING TEAM FOR THE OMC GREAT GATHERING TEACHING ABOUT HOW TO CREATE SAFE AND AFFIRMING FAITH-BASED CAMP SETTINGS FOR TRANS+ YOUTH

Finally, we wrapped up the year by dreaming and scheming for 2026!

CORE IMPACT THEMES

1

Queer Survival
& Solidarity

2

Creating &
Defending
Queer Space in
a Hostile
Landscape

3

Culture, Joy,
Relationships,
& Stories as
Resistance



CORE IMPACT THEMES

1 QUEER SURVIVAL & SOLIDARITY

Mobilizing mutual aid to meet material needs with dignity, speed, and care.



RAPID RESPONSE

TRUST-BASED DISTRIBUTION

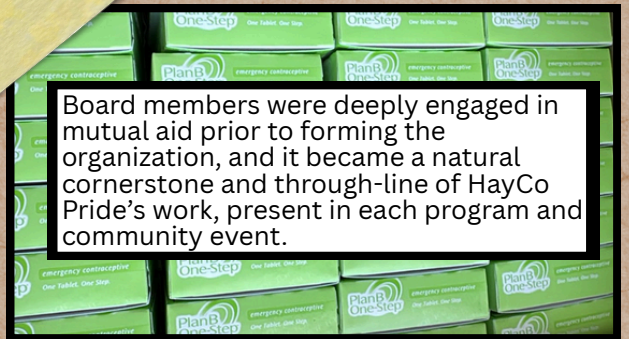


INFRASTRUCTURE-BUILDING

CLEAR POLITICAL ETHIC



Board members were deeply engaged in mutual aid prior to forming the organization, and it became a natural cornerstone and through-line of HayCo Pride's work, present in each program and community event.



1 QUEER SURVIVAL & SOLIDARITY

Mutual aid is not temporary relief or charity. It is political, relational, and transformative.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Little Free Queer Store
- Really, Really Free Market Event
- Mini grant program: \$3250 to 18 households across 4 counties
- Plan B distribution: 100+ doses
- Hotel stays covered
- Food, hygiene, diapers, medical supplies distribution
- Cooling stations
- Self-defense skillshare and supplies
- Care kits for unhoused neighbors
- Air purifiers (including DIY!) for medically sensitive households and K/N-95 distribution during wildfires

From our initial inception in 2024, through January and into December of 2025, one of the consistent threads that tied our work together is our commitment to **Queer Solidarity & Survival**. Mobilizing mutual aid to meet the material needs of our most vulnerable community members with dignity, speed, and care has been a top priority of our organization since even before Helene.

We knew that part of the purpose behind HayCo Pride was our intention to center community members at the intersection of marginalization—Queer and Trans+ folks in poverty; Black, brown, and Indigenous LGBTQIA2S+ folks; neighbors experiencing housing insecurity, etc.—recognizing that the **LGBTQIA+ community is disproportionately impacted** by the struggles represented at these points of intersection. However, we don't limit our mutual aid efforts to people based on identity. Everyone is encouraged to give and receive.

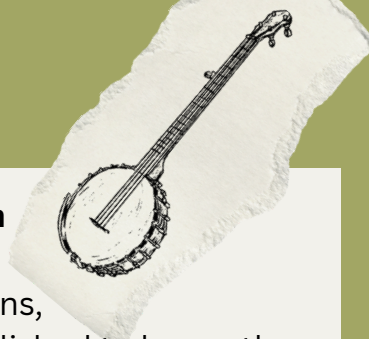
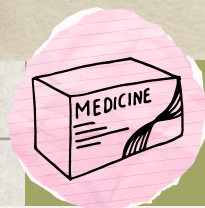
While coordinating our original Queer Culture Celebration, our plans always included a Free Market for goods and services to be made accessible to our Queer & Trans community. When faced with the reality that we would need to cancel our launch event after pouring time and energy into planning for months, we remained true to our commitment and moved with flexibility and determination to meet the moment in the wake of Helene's impact.

As we moved through 2025, faced with new challenges and needs, we continued to adapt while keeping that same commitment to solidarity and survival at the forefront of our work. Our journey has been full circle – what began as intentions for a network of care morphed into rapid response, and has since grown into the beginnings of the durable infrastructure that we had first envisioned in early 2024.

1

QUEER SURVIVAL & SOLIDARITY CONT.

CORE IMPACT THEMES



To kick off 2025, we received **our first foundation grant: \$2,500 from John Prine’s “Hello in There” Foundation.** In alignment with our commitment to reclaiming our cultural identity as Queer Appalachians, it is especially fitting that our funding came from a foundation established to honor the memory of an Appalachian Country-Folk legend like John Prine. Staying true to that alignment, we poured that funding directly into our community through our first-ever **Mini-Grant Program.** Within two days of announcing the program, we reached our application goal and every single applicant received support. We supplemented the foundation grant with funds raised from our **“Queer as Folk” benefit concert,** so that **more than \$3,250 was distributed in direct mutual aid to 18 households across four Western North Carolina counties. No hoops, no hierarchy, no questions asked beyond “what do you need?”**

The **Really, Really Free Market** was held on the **Spring Equinox,** and felt like a vibrant testament to the work we set out to do just one year earlier. Over the course of three hours—even while snow flurries began to make their appearance—**hundreds of neighbors from all walks of life came together to share with one another, giving and receiving** anything and everything imaginable. Rather than a charitable transaction between “haves” and “have nots,” everyone was a part of a reciprocal exchange. Folks brought extra things they didn’t need and left with arms full of the things that would make their lives easier: from housewares to furniture, from clothing to board games, from medical equipment to pet care supplies. **We broke bread over hot lentil soup, shared stories, and nurtured new connections across class, race, gender, age, and all the other differences that usually keep us divided.**



OUR MOST COMMONLY REQUESTED ITEMS FOR MUTUAL AID WERE HYGIENE PRODUCTS, CHILDCARE SUPPLIES, AND OVER THE COUNTER MEDS



WE RECEIVED SUPPLIES FROM PARTNERS IN RALEIGH, BRISTOL, TEXAS, & MORE!

THE LITTLE FREE QUEER STORE SUPPLIED MULTIPLE EXPECTING MOMS WITH CRITICAL SUPPLIES



1

QUEER SURVIVAL & SOLIDARITY CONT.

CORE IMPACT THEMES

Throughout the year, HayCo Pride consistently distributed food staples, hygiene supplies, childcare items, menstrual products, pet food, medical and first-aid supplies, reproductive care necessities, and household essentials – work that was fortified by the opening of the **Little Free Queer Store!** The name “Queer Store” was chosen as an intentional beacon of welcoming and inclusion, rather than a message of exclusivity, knowing that many of the local pantries and nonprofit services have high barriers to entry or are facilitated by faith-based organizations that may not be the most accepting towards (or comfortable for) LGBTQIA2S+ folks. Despite the name, there were **no eligibility requirements** for community members to visit the Little Free Queer Store; we met neighbors that were straight and gay, old and young, Spanish-speaking, parents and retirees, single and married and widowed, and the list goes on. **Anybody that is a part of our community, and wants to be a part of our constellation of care, is always welcomed by HayCo Pride – at the Free Store and beyond.**



Our commitment to mutual aid included responding in real time to **overlapping crises** and the needs vocalized by our community. Outside of the store walls, we showed up to meet moments of urgency with mutual aid in many forms that stretched far and wide across the hollers of Haywood County. When **wildfires** tore through the region, fueled by flood debris left behind from Hurricane Helene, we partnered with Mutual Aid Disaster Relief to build out **DIY air purifiers**. Bad air quality from the smoke meant new challenges for elders, children, and other medically fragile folks, and exposure risks for everybody in the area. In solidarity, we distributed over **two dozen purifiers to vulnerable households** around the county, along with countless protective masks. When we saw some of the **hottest temperatures recorded in NC** over the summer, we partnered with folks like the Funky Fern to set up **cooling stations** around the county, filled with electrolytes, ice, water, and damp rags.

We covered **emergency hotel stays**. We partnered with Plan B Community Impact to distribute **over 100 doses of Plan B, free of charge**. Our members assembled and shared **care kits** with unhoused neighbors, pairing supplies with information about hot meals, showers, and pantry access. **Our work made it possible to survive, together.**

WE BUILT DIY AIR PURIFIERS OUT OF SUPPLIES PURCHASED BY MADR, THEN WE DISTRIBUTED 24+ AROUND THE COUNTY



COOLING STATION
FREE! Take what you need, stay safe in the heat!
@HayCoPride

WHY PLAN B? REPRODUCTIVE AUTONOMY IS A QUEER ISSUE!



CORE IMPACT THEMES

2

CREATING & DEFENDING QUEER SPACE IN A HOSTILE LANDSCAPE



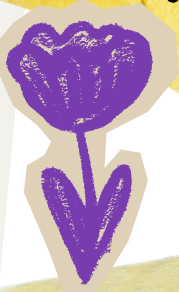
OCCUPYING PHYSICAL SPACE



PUBLICLY STANDING FIRM IN OUR PRINCIPLES



CONSISTENT COMMUNITY PRESENCE



COLLECTIVE ACTIVITIES FOR EVERYDAY LIFE



2 CREATING & DEFENDING QUEER SPACE IN A HOSTILE LANDSCAPE

Building, defending, and adapting Queer Safety as a refusal to be silenced or erased by increasing political violence.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Pivoting and adapting when the Little Free Queer Store had to move locations unexpectedly
- Taking a firm public stance on policing at Pride events
- HayQueer Hikes to reclaim our space in nature
- Crafting faith-based trans-affirming training to reclaim our right to spirituality
- A community-catalyzed Trans+ Support Group and YoGay Class

Helene. Hostile actors. Empty promises. Silence from those in power. Scapegoating. All of these experiences and more can create feelings of fear, insecurity, and anger for queer and trans folks in every holler. Most of us have felt dread, isolation, and loneliness at some point or another, especially as white supremacist heteropatriarchal capitalism continues to fester in every facet of our society. Many community members within HayCo Pride have voiced their worry about all the pressures of just trying to survive through this sh*tshow.



At HayCo Pride, we know that safety—**queer safety, especially—is not given. It is built, defended, and adapted.** This year, we stretched beyond facilitating conversations to curate physical havens where folks felt like they could let go of their fear and defenses, even for just a little bit. From zero-barrier mutual aid in our free store to laughing in the woods; from responding to climate change by caring for our neighbors to leading cosplay panels for other queer nerds; from showing up for Pride across neighboring counties to carving out intentional space for trans+ folks, **we've fiercely defended our right to be here** – not just Haywood County, not just in Western North Carolina or Appalachia, but in every nook and cranny of the messy-beautiful-scary landscape we inhabit.

2

CREATING & DEFENDING QUEER SPACE CONT.

CORE IMPACT THEMES

We take care of us. After operating the Little Free Queer Store for four months, we grew from being open for a few hours on just one day out of the week to being open a total of **17 hours across five days each week, with a core team of five amazing volunteers.** Unfortunately, in June, the place we were renting became a hostile environment for the work that we do and the community members that do it, and we ended the rental relationship. Never down for long, we plotted and pivoted to launch a **fundraising campaign in July to purchase an enclosed trailer to take the Little Free Queer Store on the go** as a source of mobile mutual aid.

We keep us safe. While we were packing up to move out of the rented space, we were also participating in numerous Pride events all across the region, prompting us to craft a statement on police presence at Pride events. Our statement was shared online and dispersed around town, recognizing the origins of the Pride movement in acts of resistance and the origins modern law enforcement in patrolling enslaved people. Rather than shy away from taboo topics and critique of institutions, we call upon our ancestors' wisdom to **imagine new ways of being in relationship with each other and keep each other safe without relying on structures that criminalize and brutalize. We stand firm in our belief that law enforcement do not make us safer as queer people.**

We are all we need. Our community-driven programs expanded more than we ever could have imagined this year. In the Spring we introduced YoGay! Queer & Trans+ yoga, catalyzed in partnership with our friend Dawn Davita. Then, in late September, one of our community members reached out with an idea to carve out a pocket of safety for themselves and others. What began as concern about trans-centered rhetoric evolved into a conversation about a purposeful safe space. We were able to work together to create a **peer support group specifically designed to meet the needs of our local trans+ community.** Our friend, and greater community, feel empowered by being able to create a space where we can hold each other in all the grief, anger, anxiety, and joy, that comes with being trans+.

We defend us and our future. As the year came to a close, we attended the **Great Gathering of the Outdoor Ministries Connection**, an event that brings together faith-based summer camp leaders from across North America to learn practical ways to address the needs of the communities they serve. In addition to hosting an LGBTQIA+ resource table at the Welcome Center during conference check-in, we **led a workshop on creating safe and affirming summer camp spaces for trans+ youth.** Our workshop explored topics of shifting away from unnecessary gendered language, modifying sleeping and bathhouse arrangements, and navigating the sensitive situation of a kid coming out at camp. The information shared through this workshop will positively impact future Trans+ campers for whom summer camp is a life-giving and life-saving experience – **creating new safe spaces for current and future generations of Trans+ folks** as our work ripples outward.



AS OF JANUARY 2026, WE ARE JUST OVER HALFWAY TOWARDS OUR GOAL OF \$5,000 TO COVER THE TRAILER AND ASSOCIATED COSTS!



2

CREATING &
DEFENDING QUEER
SPACE CONT.

HAYQUEER HIKES

One spring afternoon at the Little Free Queer Store, two volunteers posed the idea for a queer hiking group as a way to gather and connect with each other over a shared adoration for the natural environment around us as queer and trans folks living in this particular region. A couple weeks and a few organizing conversations later, **HayQueer Hikes was born as a monthly adventurous gathering for queer and trans+ folks to get outside and affirm our right to take up space wherever we are.**

What started as a little group of five folks on our first hike in May grew **to a mailing list of over 100 people by December**, representing a cohort of QT+ hikers from Haywood County and beyond—including neighbors from Buncombe, Henderson, Polk, Jackson, and Transylvania Counties. With **56 total hikers**, we carved out queer space for ourselves at Moore Cove Falls, Pink Beds, Waterrock Knob, Graveyard Fields, Lake Junaluska, Frying Pan Mountain, Soco Falls, and Haw Creek Overlook—**collectively hiking about 20 miles together!** From Pisgah National Forest to the Blue Ridge Parkway, we explored these mountains in all their queer beauty, eating together in the woods, and sharing hiking tips and names of flora and fungi along the way.

HayQueer Hikes creates a space for queer and trans folks to find reprieve from daily pressures—one where we can exist without conforming to societal expectations. Hiking together is meditative, fun, and good for our mental and physical health. Hiking as a group has allowed folks to engage in outdoor activities that otherwise feel unsafe or overwhelming by ourselves, and **it has forged bonds that cannot be recreated outside of the primal settings we explore.** For example, at our Pink Beds hike in June, the weather forecast was clear that morning. Our group was later surprised when we suddenly were faced with a torrential downpour of the southern Appalachia summertime rain.

There's just something about hustling through the woods with 10 people you just met for the last half mile of a hike, then huddling under a picnic shelter, cracking jokes and wringing out wet clothes until the rain lets up, that makes us all feel less alone when things are scary.



3

CULTURE, JOY, RELATIONSHIPS, & STORIES AS RESISTANCE

CORE IMPACT THEMES

Reclaiming our right to THRIVE in everyday life, not just survive in crisis.



ARCHIVING OUR STORIES



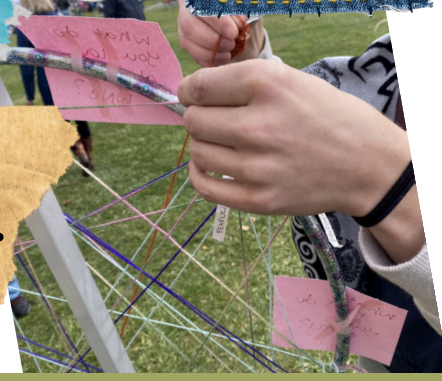
CENTERING QUEER & TRANS JOY



NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS DIFFERENCES



RECLAIMING QUEER APPALACHIAN CULTURE



3

CULTURE, JOY, RELATIONSHIPS, & STORIES AS RESISTANCE

CORE IMPACT THEMES

HIGHLIGHTS

- Zines! Art projects!
- Participation in Trans+ Pride, Smoky Mountains Blue Grass Festival, Blue Ridge Pride, Hendersonville Pride, and Nerd Pride Fest
- Trans Pride t-shirt campaign
- Official partnership with Invisible Histories
- Relationships across generation and location

As we shifted from immediate survival post Helene and looked towards long term care, we organically began to integrate capsules of joy. We collaborated with the community to build **two seasonal zines**, highlighting different events, spreading resources, and providing a coloring pastime. We are grateful to have been involved in an array of events, from **the first Trans+ Pride** in WNC, to making new friends at **Hendersonville Pride**, to creating **queer-centered community art projects at the Smoky Mountains Bluegrass Festival**. One of our board members, Hil, even extended into the cosplay world, hosting a **Cosplay 101 panel for Nerd Pride Fest!** This was followed by **two stand-up routines** by Max, one at Trans+ Pride and another at Blue Ridge Pride. We also ran our first **t-shirt campaign**, centering trans youth and joy in spite of anti-trans legislation.



The **Smoky Mountains Bluegrass Festival** was one of our favorite events of the year. After a windy morning setting up, folks began to trickle into the Maggie Valley Fairgrounds against a backdrop of October reds, yellows, and oranges on the mountainside. Some folks were curious about the booth with the rainbow flags, others about the community art projects, but almost all of them just wanted to express **gratitude: for us showing up, for bringing supplies to the community, even for an ear to listen**. Many participated in the **“Strings that Bind Us”** activity we facilitated to create an art piece that exhibits the many things we have in common and celebrates our differences through the weaving of a beautiful web of yarn.

3 CULTURE, JOY, RELATIONSHIPS, & STORIES AS RESISTANCE

CORE IMPACT THEMES

Also in the fall, thanks to an introduction from our friends at Blue Ridge Pride, **HayQueer Hikes caught the attention of Pattie Gonia**, the incredible environmental and LGBTQ+ activist and drag performer. A couple of our board members had the chance to hike with Pattie and her team while they filmed content at Black Balsam Knob to share that the Parkway had finally reopened after Helene. We got the chance to speak with Pattie about what it's like being queer and trans in rural Appalachia and to help show her around our part of the mountains. She confessed that this was the furthest south she had ever been, and it was an honor to be a part of shifting her perception of our home as a place where queer and trans people have to hide to survive.



Pattie isn't the only activist we met as a result of HayQueer Hikes: at our October hike to Fryingpan Mountain Lookout Tower, we happened to stop for a break at the same time and place as an elderly gay couple visiting from DC. Gaydars went off all around, and we got to talking about showing up for ourselves and each other as queer and trans folks. We ended up inviting them along for the rest of the hike as they shared stories of community care during the AIDS crisis in the 80s: meal trains, volunteer nurses, and eventually, a community center for queer youth who were cast out by their families after coming out. They expressed pride in our work and faith in the younger generations as they encouraged us to keep doing what we're doing: **building and defending queer community and joy at all costs.**

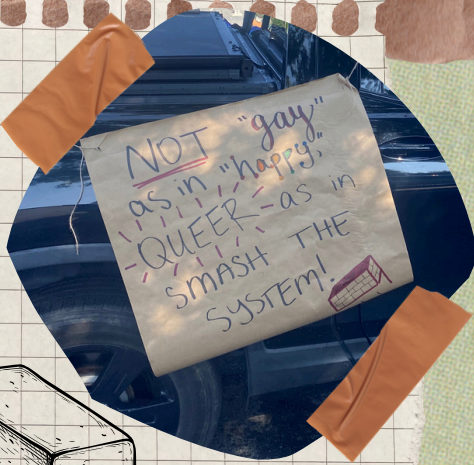
At HayCo Pride, we celebrate these stories, and we soak them up whenever we can—documenting proof of our existence and how we got by and how we are linked to each other, so that future generations may have a roadmap and so that our people are never forgotten or erased. **We are grateful to partner with Invisible Histories for this archival work**, especially at this critical moment where data and proof of LGBTQ+ existence is being erased from the public sphere, including government websites and universities.




As a community, we often experience reactionary crisis care: stop the immediate wound of whatever is affecting our family in the moment, treat it and hold space for it rather than cultivating a world where our relationships help us prevent falling into the despair of facism. **Our survival as queer and trans people is dependent on the pockets of joy we create by reaching out towards each other, across lines of difference, to see and hold each other and our stories – personal and collective – in all our authenticity.**

LOOKING AHEAD

The Work Continues...




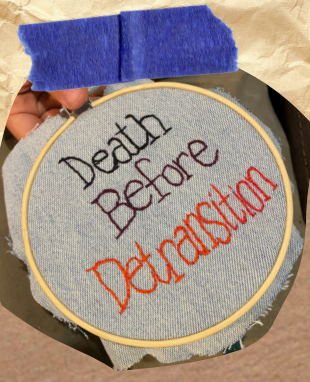
HayCo Pride was born in response to a specific moment, but it exists for the long arc. The work we've done together over the past year+ has shown what is possible when **care is local, relationships are trusted, and community is treated as something we actively build rather than wait to be granted.**



We are living in a national climate shaped by escalating attacks on LGBTQIA+ lives, particularly trans and gender-diverse people. These pressures do not land evenly. In rural and mountain communities like ours, where resources are often limited and visibility can carry risk, the stakes are high. Policy debates elsewhere become lived realities here: impacting access to healthcare, safety in public space, housing stability, and the ability to gather without fear.

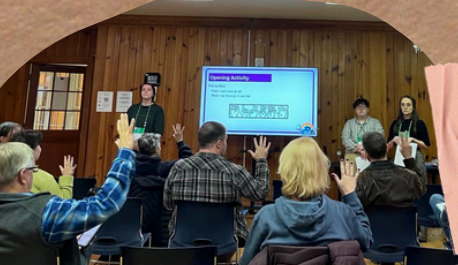
Against this backdrop, **HayCo Pride is committed to protecting and growing what we have built:**

- Community-led mutual aid rooted in dignity and trust
- Queer and trans spaces that are adaptive, accessible, and responsive
- Cultural work that affirms joy, history, and belonging
- Relationships that cross difference, generation, faith, and geography



At the same time, we are clear-eyed about what remains unfinished. The need for care continues to grow. Sustainable space remains uncertain. Leadership development, long-term funding, and deeper infrastructure are ongoing efforts. **This work cannot, and should not, rest on the shoulders of a few.**

We must move forward, not because the work is easy, but because it is necessary. Not because the future is guaranteed, but because community gives us something worth building toward. **When we invest in one another locally, we expand what is possible collectively.**



The next chapter of HayCo Pride will be shaped not by fear, but by the ongoing practice of **hope, resilience, and shared responsibility.** Together, we carry it forward.

JOIN US!!



HayCo Pride exists because we choose one another in community in moments of crisis, joy, grief, and becoming. What we have built together is not an event, a brand, or a moment in time. It is a living network of care, resistance, and love rooted in this place and these people.

But this work has never been meant to be carried by a few. It grows when more of us step in. You are invited to be part of this work in the ways that make sense for your life, your capacity, and your values.



PARTNER IN SOLIDARITY

We collaborate with orgs who believe that liberation is collective, who want to expand what's possible and who feels safe to belong. **If you'd like to partner, send us an email at info@haycopride.com.**



SHOW UP WITH US

Whether you have a few hours, a specific skill, or a desire to learn alongside others, there is space for you at HayCo Pride to co-create the community we want to see. **Sign up to volunteer at bit.ly/haycopridevolunteer.**



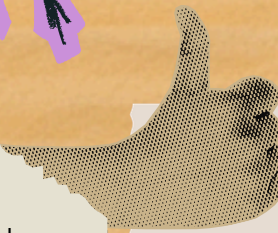
SHARE YOUR STORY

Your experiences, memories, and reflections help shape the narrative of queer life, resilience, and joy in Haywood County and beyond. **To add your story to our growing Queer Archive, email us at info@haycopride.com.**



GIVE WHAT YOU CAN

Your donations fuel rapid mutual aid, community safety infrastructure, free programs, and the everyday acts of care that keep our people alive. Every dollar is an investment in dignity, trust, and queer survival in Appalachia. **Donate via PayPal at bit.ly/donatehaycopride or Venmo [@haycopride](https://venmo.com/haycopride).**



STAND WITH US OUT LOUD

Public solidarity matters. When you support HayCo Pride, you help create safer conditions for queer and trans people to live openly and fully here, now, and into the future.

Pride has never been about one month, one parade, or being seen once a year. It has always been about staying alive and seeking to thrive together. **Stand with us in building the future our community deserves.**

