



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Beyond Celebrates Pride, Offers Programs & Camp for LGBTQ+ Youth 12-17**

*Programming supported in part by National Grid*



*Participants gather at GSNYPENN's Camp Amahami in Deposit, N.Y., during Camp Beyond's inaugural season in the summer of 2022.*

**Syracuse, N.Y.** (June 18, 2024) — Beyond, which offers programming to support the health, success and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth ages 12-17 and their families, is celebrating Pride month across the region. Powered by [Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways](https://www.gsnypenn.org) (GSNYPENN), Beyond programming includes Camp Beyond. This traditional overnight summer camp provides a safe, affirming environment led by professional staff from the LGBTQ+ community.

“We envision a world where all LGBTQ+ youth recognize their limitless potential, feel celebrated for who they are and draw strength from a community that understands and supports them,” says GSNYPENN CEO Julie Dale.

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## BEYOND – PRIDE /PG. 2

“Youth who identify as a cultural or religious minority, speak English as a second language or live with a disability may readily look to family members for support; LGBTQ+ youth commonly don’t have the same access,” says Emery Grant (he/him), Beyond Program Director. “Even in New York, where discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in public accommodations is illegal, members of the community may not be visible, living openly or treated with kindness, acceptance and respect.”

For young people figuring out who they are, at the beginning of their journeys of character development and looking for context and affirmation, the social-emotional and physical health consequences can be dire. Beyond programming includes Camp Beyond during the summer, regional meetups for youth and their families, talent and art shows, writing workshops, social-emotional learning, strategies for supporting mental health, peer friendships, guest speakers, movies, a gender-inclusive clothing closet, self-advocacy, civic engagement, travel opportunities and resources for families.

Beyond staff and supporters have participated in and/or will take part in many local Pride events this month including Elmira LGBTQ Pride, Lewis County Pride, SoFlx Pride, Drag Story Time with the Q Center, Watertown LGBTQ+ Pride, CNY Pride Parade, Cortland LGBTQ Pride and a Pride All Year Celebration for employees of National Grid.



*Camp Beyond participants make a fire during the summer of 2023 session held at GSNYPENN's Camp Comstock property in Ithaca, N.Y.*

Now heading into its third summer season, most Camp Beyond participants are returning campers. Grant says it’s humbling to hear from parents and guardians that the experience has helped to, in their opinions, “save their child’s life.” While ensuring youth receive an unforgettable week of fun at camp through outdoor adventures—like hiking, swimming, boating, bonfires, camaraderie, games, and most of all peer connection—Camp Beyond also provides LGBTQ+ youth access to adult professionals from within the community to see models of positive character, success and healthy coping strategies.

“At Beyond, we emphasize self-advocacy, resilience and normalizing spaces where we can be ourselves as LGBTQ+ people with integrity and mutual respect. One important piece is making LGBTQ+ youth aware of the community’s rich history, culture and people of achievement who came before them,” adds Grant.

“Whether on movie night, a display during mealtimes or a lending library of titles written for young adults, there is always ample support and access,” he says.

***Support from National Grid***

National Grid, the largest energy delivery company in Upstate New York, has supported Beyond since its inception. In addition to corporate support, the company’s LGBTQ+ employee resource group, PrideUS, designated Beyond as the preferred beneficiary for employee contributions and the company’s matching gift program during Pride month. National Grid employees have volunteered at Camp Beyond and can contribute to its community closet by shopping from an Amazon wish list developed by GSNYPENN. Support of Beyond programming is one facet of the global company’s activities during Pride month, which includes participation in local Pride parades and events, education programs open to all employees and the raising of the Pride flag at its facilities in the United States and United Kingdom.

**Camp Beyond has an open house slated for Sunday, June 23, at GSNYPENN’s Camp Amahami in Deposit, N.Y. For further information about that event, to learn more about Beyond and how to join the email list, to register for Camp Beyond or to learn how to support programming, visit [BeyondBinary.org](http://BeyondBinary.org).**

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