

Red Bank Green

GAY PRIDE TO PLANT A RED BANK FLAG



The June 20 event, at the Two River Theater, will feature an open mic for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youths to tell their stories.

By DANIELLE TEPPER

Joining the ranks of cities and towns across America, Red Bank is set to hold [Two River Pride](#), its first-ever community event to commemorate the struggles and accomplishments of the gay community.

[Ed Zipprich](#), the borough's first openly gay elected official, tells **redbankgreen** that Two River Pride is a response to inquiries from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals about the absence of events during June, designated as [LGBT Pride Month](#) to commemorate the 1969 [Stonewall riots](#) in Manhattan that sparked the gay rights movement.

"For years, we've been asked why we don't do an event, and it's because no one ever took the initiative to start one," he said. "So Kathy Horgan and I put our heads together," he said of his fellow member of the borough council.

Slated for June 20 at the [Two River Theater](#), the event is co-sponsored Horgan and Zipprich, as well as [Human Relations Committee](#) chair David Pascale, the Two River Theater Company and [Make It Better for Youth](#), a Monmouth County consortium for LGBT youth. The planning process started at the end of April, and organizers had it planned within a few weeks.

"We all sat down around a table at the theater one Friday afternoon and bounced around ideas. Everyone really pulled their weight, and now it's a reality," said Zipprich.

Since a rash of highly publicized teen suicides in 2010, Zippirch has been an outspoken advocate for causes like the [It Gets Better Project](#), even submitting his own [video](#).

"It goes on every day in schools," he said of harassment. "You witnessed it, I witnessed it. I was the brunt of hate jokes. It was a natural evolution with the work that I've done as an openly gay politician to make sure that we continue to make it better."

The event will focus on supporting youth voices, with an open mic segment that will allow teens to share spoken word, songs, poems, or any expression of their personal stories. In turn, local business owners and other out adults in the community will be able to tell their coming out stories as a way to become role models to kids in the audience. Mayor Pasquale Menna will also read a pride proclamation.

Guest speakers include community advocates Detective David D'Amico, who investigates bias crimes for the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office, and Brenda "Sue" Fulton, executive director and co-founder of [Knights Out](#) and a founding member of [OutServe](#).

According to Zipprich, "people have basically come out of the woodwork to show their support." [PFLAG](#) and [Glsen](#) are also involved, while local restaurants such as [Dish](#) and [Via45](#) will be donating food for the reception.

Although Red Bank hasn't suffered any headline-worthy tragedies of its own, Zipprich said that he hopes the event will have a significant impact on both the LGBT community and the town as a whole.

"I think times are changing," he said. "Young people don't see the difference between gay and straight as readily as they used to 25, 30 years ago. But if they do feel unsafe, this is a way to show them that they have someone to turn to."

While time constraints made it difficult to organize an "extravaganza" along the lines of [Asbury Park](#)'s, Zipprich feels the intimate indoor setting might help kids feel less intimidated about participating. "We have an inclusive community and we want to see it affect that community as a whole," he said.

Two River Pride, which runs from 6 to 9 p.m., is open to the public. A \$5 contribution is suggested, which will support Make It Better for Youth. For more information, contact pride@makeitbetter4youth.org or visit the event page on [Facebook](#).