

Pacific Pride Foundation Hosts LGBTQ+ Youth Conference And Prom

In its seventh year, Pacific Pride Foundation's Youth Connect Conference and PROUD Prom will take place Saturday, Feb. 15, at Deckers Brands global headquarters in Goleta. LGBTQ+ youth and allies from throughout the Central and South coasts will experience a day of impact and celebration.



The event begins with the Youth Connect Conference at 2 p.m., featuring workshops and activities to empower youth activism, develop community resilience, and foster strong social justice networks.

Keynote speaker for the event will be Ryan O'Connell, author, comedy writer, and star of the Netflix series "Special." The series, based on O'Connell's memoir "I'm Special: And Other Lies We Tell Ourselves," is loosely based on his upbringing, growing up with cerebral palsy,

discovering he was gay and navigating through his 20s.



A Ventura native, O'Connell will join other local LGBTQ+ community members to speak and answer questions for the 300 youth expected to attend.

Following the conference, teens can attend PPF's PROUD Prom, 5-10 p.m., with a live DJ, performances by local transgender and drag performers, and some surprises. The event is free for teens of all identities and genders, and includes dinner and workshop materials.



“Our Youth Connect Conference is a heartwarming, unique event in our community for LGBTQ+ teens to develop leadership skills and meet their peers from other schools and towns,” said Colette Schabram, executive director of PPF. “This kind of environment and connection is crucial for our local LGBTQ+ youth.

“With LGBT students in Santa Barbara County schools reporting being bullied twice as much as their non-LGBT peers, this event, along with our year-long youth programming, increases safety and decreases stigma for LGBTQ+ teens on the Central Coast.”



Youth can RSVP at tinyurl.com/InterestedInPROUDProm. Adults interested in volunteering can visit the same link. For more information, contact LGBTQ+ program manager Patrick Lyra, [805-963-3636](tel:805-963-3636) ext. 102 or patricklyra@pacificpridefoundation.org.

PPF provides programs and services to 10,000 people in Santa Barbara County and supports local LGBTQ+ youth with activities and resources year-round. Programs include youth group meetings in Santa Barbara and Santa Maria, summer leadership opportunities, in-school academic and

social support, and the Youth Connect Conference and PROUD Prom.

For more information or to make a donation, visit
pacificpridefoundation.org.