

THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGIAN

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NoCo SafeSpace's march kicks off Pride Month in FoCo



A large crowd pours into Oak Street Plaza to celebrate Pride in Fort Collins June 1.

Collegian | Jenn Dawson

Jenn Dawson, Science Director

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On Thursday June 1, the Colorado monsoons gave way to a pocket of sunshine that lasted exactly as long as the Pride March hosted by NoCo SafeSpace. A rainbow crowd gathered together in Old Town Square, the pride of Downtown Fort Collins, while the sun began drying out the patios.

The parade marched from the Square, up Walnut, and across College Avenue in a train of call and repeat chants.

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"2, 4, 6, 8... How do you know your kids are straight? Hey hey, ho ho, transphobia has got to go! 5, 6, 7, 8... Stop the bigotry, stop the hate!1, 2, 3, 4... We won't take it anymore! Out of the closets and into the streets! No justice... No peace," were among chants.

All ages of humans marched together, from toddlers to elderly. The differently abled, visible and invisible, joined the rainbow wave that traveled through town, curving down Mason then Mountain and back to College.

Car horns, cheers, chants and celebration followed a crowd of families, students, and out-of-towners straight to Oak Street Plaza. About 16 people took the megaphone during the event, speaking in support of the 450+ lives gathered in the plaza, the nearly 25 million LGBTQ+ lives in the US, and the 10-12% of all living humans who do not identify as heterosexual.

"Always be true to who you are—we will get our rights," Reece, a march participant who only provided a first name, said through the megaphone.

On the steps of the Museum of Art during the weekday rush hour, volunteers came forward to speak, highlighting mental health, community support, the fight for health care, and demanding equality.

"You deserve so much better than the world you've inherited," said an unknown speaker over the crowd.

Aza Rose, leader of the chants added, "You are perfect, you belong, and I am proud of you!"

Chanting continued to draw the attention of downtown diners away from their food, and the rainbow passed over College Avenue one last time. Scores of Pride marchers crossed Mountain Avenue with banners, balloons, and a police escort overseeing 6 p.m. traffic.

Only after group photos and mingling in the square dissolved, more clouds rolled in, covering the city again and steadily continuing to hydrate Northern Colorado.

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Thursday's Pride March was the first of a full month of events Fort Collins and NoCo will host in honor of LGBTQ+ Pride Month.

Kimberly Chambers is the founder of NoCo Safespace who has overseen the Pride March for the last 5 years.

"We will do it every year," said Chambers. "Even as CSU students, everyone is welcome at NoCo SafeSpace events. We make sure that they're accessible and affordable for students who may or may not have family that's accepting of them."

Chambers said, "We have a lot of queer students that need community, especially during the summer and around the holidays when they don't have as much opportunity on campus."

NoCo SafeSpace, Splash and CSU's Pride Resource Center are among the most active LGBTQ+ organizations currently serving the area. The Pride Resource Center maintains a list of available community resources while serving mainly CSU students at their growing campus location.

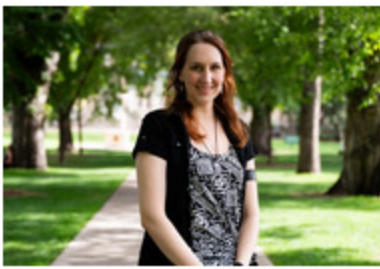
"Within the United States, we are one of those few staffed centers, now with three professional staff members," said Soleil Gonzalez, CSU's Pride Program Director.

"This is our 25th year anniversary," Gonzalez noted of the organization that continues a legacy of student advocacy and activism over generations of Coloradans. Since 1971, CSU students and the Fort Collins community have taken up leadership in NoCo, paving the way for LGBTQ+ involvement in sports, legislation, news, and local business. The Pride Resource Center will celebrate their notable milestone with the community this summer.

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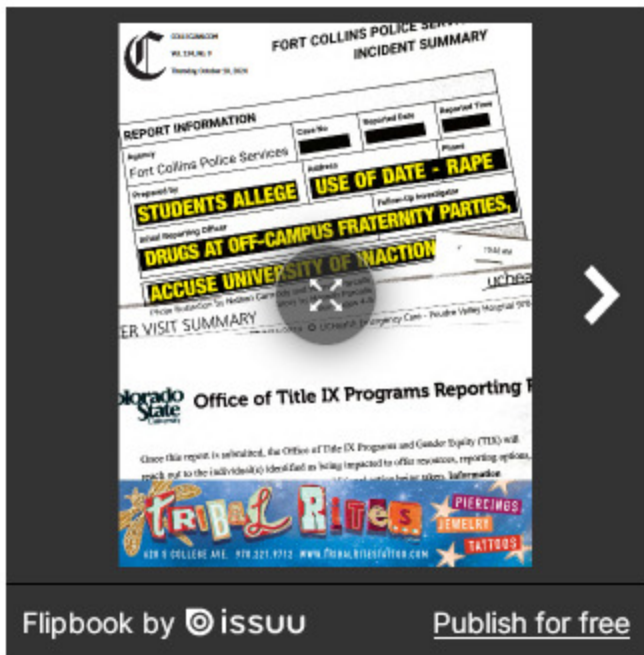
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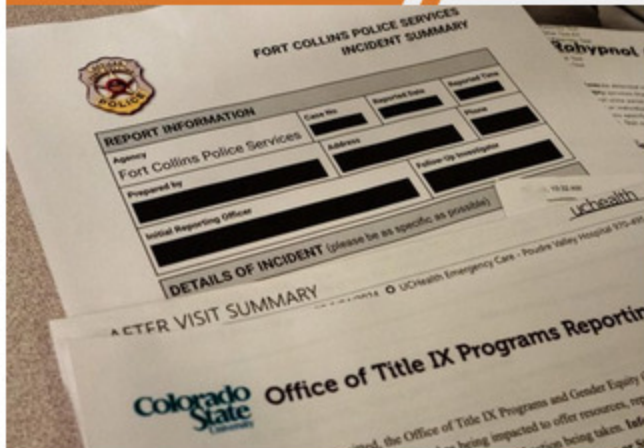


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