

RI Pride Postpones PrideFest; Launches Food Drive



Ken Barber, vice president of operations for Rhode Island Pride, inspecting and cleaning some donated tuna cans

On April 2, Rhode Island Pride announced the unanimous board vote to postpone all of its June events, including PrideFest and the Illuminated Night Parade.

“The hardest part of this is the disappointment from the community,” says Rhode Island Pride president Ray Sirico. “So many people look forward to this one day a year they can be themselves and connect with people in the community; Pride is a place where you realize you do fit in somewhere.”



Mr. Gay Rhode Island Bret Jacob putting relief packages together for needy Rhode Island families

Other board members acknowledge the scope of the circumstances. “Rhode Island Pride has held a festival for 43 years. In 1976, the community had to sue the city for the right to have the parade, and some attendees wore bags over their heads to hide their identities. It has never been postponed or cancelled for any reason; that speaks volumes on the impact of this crisis,” says Ken Barber, the Rhode Island Pride vice president of operations.

The decision was met with heartache, but understanding from the community. “The first feelings that came to my mind were disappointment and sadness that it had to be done,” says Chris Martin, a Providence resident and regular PrideFest attendee. “Though knowing the Pride community in Rhode Island, I remain confident that they will still come up with ways to celebrate the community when it is safe and realistic to do so.”



RI Pride's stock of donated bread, underneath a helpful sanitary reminder

Fortunately, RI Pride has quickly organized a new way to support the organization and the local LGBTQIA+ community: a food drive with delivery, to alleviate food insecurity resulting from the pandemic and help Rhode Island residents maintain social distance. "While the decision to postpone the festival and parade was completely separate from the food drive, it does afford us the opportunity to focus our efforts on it," says Barber. RI Pride leadership is unanimous in asking their sponsors and community to support this charitable effort.

If you are interested in volunteering in support of the RI Pride Emergency Supply Drive, send an email to info@prideri.com. To donate, visit tinyurl.com/PrideSupplyDrive.