

Letter from Grand Rapids Pagan Pride Director

Why Support the Pagan Pride Project?



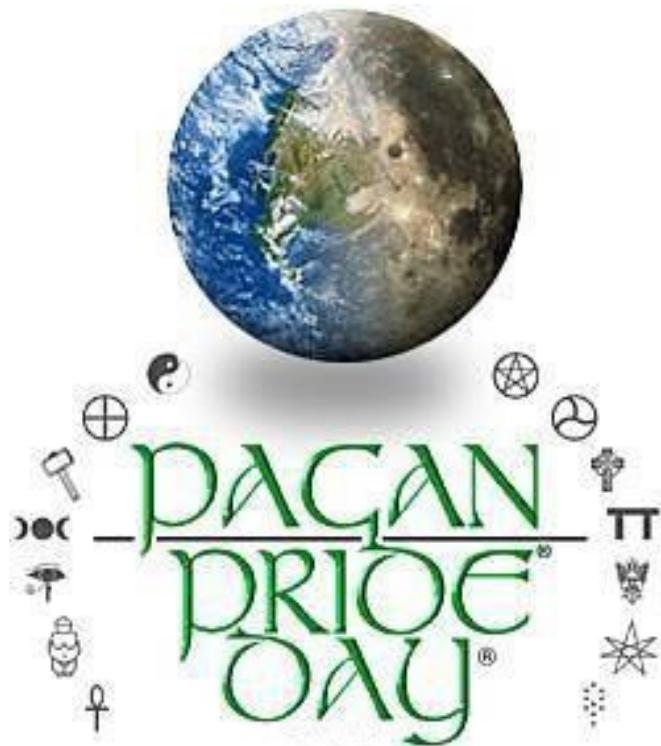
Through education, activism, charity and community, the project promotes tolerance and understanding between people with different belief systems. If you are a Pagan, the project can help you find pride and confidence in your path. If you are not a Pagan, the project can help you understand your Pagan friends, coworkers, and family members.

How long has it been...

Dagonet Dewr, Executive Director, Brian Ewing, Membership Director "Nobody really knows who first used the term "Pagan Pride". In name, it owes its origins to the Gay Pride movement, and certainly it is a term that reaches far beyond any single organization. It cannot be copyrighted; the founders have always felt it would be a breach of honor and decency to copyright it. There are rumors of single, local events using the name of Pagan Pride as early as 1992, though no documentation of these events has been found. We can, however, safely identify and document the first organized movement to support and encourage public celebrations of Pagan Pride in communities all over the world -- the Pagan Pride Project. The history of the Pagan Pride Project starts with Cecylyna Brightsword.

What do we provide.

From the beginning, Cecylyna's vision of what Pagan Pride Day should be included several departures from the celebrations common to the Pagan community. Her proposal included the central core of what has become the Pagan Pride Project, three elements designed to increase community good will and public relations towards Paganism: a public ritual or celebration open to Pagans, non-Pagans, passersby, and onlookers; press releases and public relations activities designed to encourage positive media portrayal of Pagans and Paganism; and a food and materials drive for a local charity, food bank, shelter, or refuge, to symbolize both Pagan responsibilities to their town, city, or state and in honor of the various Thanksgiving holidays common to most Pagan traditions held around Fall Equinox. While



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many Pagan Pride Day celebrations have included more than this, every celebration ever held as a part of the Pagan Pride Project has included at least two, if not all, of these elements. (Two of the celebrations in 1998 were food drives only.)

The proposal generated some interest in PAL (*Pagan Awareness League*), but a combination of personal issues in Cecylyna's life and PAL's sporadic activity meant that PPD remained inactive until around Lammas of 1998, when Cecylyna returned with a public apology for her inactivity and in six weeks with the help of a dedicated group of Local Coordinators held the first ever Pagan Pride Day on September 19, 1998.

There were 18 celebrations that first year, 17 in the United States and one in Canada. All were small, and while attendance figures were never totaled formally, a rough estimate would probably include about 800-1000 attendees. Food drive numbers were not collected. While many Local Coordinators were PAL members, Pagan Pride Day was never a part of PAL's official events, and by the end of the 1998 celebrations the term 'Pagan Pride Project' was being used for the organization, usually shortened to PPP. PAL soon after dissolved and reformed as PACT, which has no relationship to the Pagan Pride Project. Pagan Pride Project has existed for the last 21 years.

Grand Rapids Pagan Pride would like give Thanks! Everyone that helps put the Grand Rapids event on the map. Thank You!! Pagan Pride National: Brian Ewing, President and Carla Smith, Vice President, Ohio Valley Regional Coordinator: Carrie Zay, Grand rapids Parks and Rec, Arthur J Gallagher & Co. insurance company. The biggest Thanks and Appreciation has to go to the communities: Pagan Family and Friends of West Michigan, Wolf Run Spiritual and Wildlife Sanctuary, and several other groups. Vendors like Mother Moon , Treasures of Isis by Design and so many more that continue to come to Grand Rapids Pagan Pride Day each year. Performers like Bell Book Canto, Steel Lotus Flowers, Tweeler the Fool and Scared Drum. Thanks go to everyone... Everyone that has ever come through the gate, Thank you!!!

How will the Grand Rapids event continue? We pray as it always has by the arms of the like-minded, the caring hearts and those moved by Spirit to help it continue. By individuals and groups that are proud to walk a Spiritual path that is constantly growing. Those who understand there is more to the term family that meets the eye.

Where can you donate for the Grand Rapids Pagan Pride event? PayPal, just enter our email
grppd_michigan@yahoo.com from your computer or phone.

