

[https://www.hastingsstargazette.com/news/pride-festival-highlights-inclusivity-diversity/article\\_2274698a-e803-11ec-9734-db02d0ab4db2.html](https://www.hastingsstargazette.com/news/pride-festival-highlights-inclusivity-diversity/article_2274698a-e803-11ec-9734-db02d0ab4db2.html)

LOCAL NEWS

## Pride Festival highlights inclusivity, diversity

written by Charlie Swanson

Published on Jun 9, 2022



IDEA Co-Founder Marta Tierney (center) holds up a pride flag as she helps lead the IDEA Pride Parade in 2021. Photo supplied by IDEA Hastings.

IDEA Hastings, a non-profit that supports marginalized demographics, will be celebrating inclusivity and diversity at its second annual Pride Festival set to take place June 11 from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The festival will kick off with a parade starting at McNamara Stadium and ending at Jaycee Park. An opening ceremony will follow the parade.

There will not be a shortage of food, drinks and entertainment to indulge in during the festival.

There will be a beer garden and a multitude of food trucks, yard games and vendors from all over the area providing merchandise and information. The festival is family friendly, and kids can entertain themselves in the bouncy house or try their hand at the slide dunk tank.

A diverse stable of 34 performing artists has been booked for the festival. This lineup of performers includes a poet, recording artists, bands, rappers and drag kings and queens. Even man's best friend will get to strut their stuff during the puppy drag show.

Mayor Mary Fasbender will be officiating a royal party during which Hastings first-ever pride royalty will be dubbed. Royalty hopefuls include Angie Haus, a candidate for City Council, and 8-year-old Kit Waits, a former Hastings resident who was the subject of social media taunts after being identified as being transgender.

The festival will conclude with a neon party at 8 p.m. and an after-party at the Social Tavern beginning at 9 p.m.

Waits' story is demonstrative of the void IDEA has been trying to fill since they began protesting and advocating on behalf of the people of color and LGBTQ+ communities. The idea for IDEA followed the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020.



IDEA volunteers protesting in support of the Black Lives Matter movement on May 27, 2020.

Photo supplied by IDEA Hastings.

IDEA co-founder Marta Tierney helped organize a Black Lives Matter protest two days after Floyd's death. She soon realized that there was much more marginalization to address than just the Black Lives Matter movement.

Tierney and her team began hearing stories about incidents targeting gay and transgender individuals, especially at the grade school level.





IDEA Co-Founder Marta Tierney speaks in support of Kit Waits at a trans rally at the Hastings Rotary Pavilion.  
Photo supplied by IDEA Hastings.

“There had to be something that was changed ... Hastings needed an awakening,” Tierney said.

This led to the IDEA group. IDEA stands for inclusion, diversity and equity alliance. Their efforts to date include a pride festival, a Juneteenth demonstration, a march for inclusion, a freedom march and Coloring for Kindness, which was an inclusion event for children introducing them to diversity.

The organization currently has nine members on its board and has around 200 volunteers that have participated in IDEA events, according to Tierney. IDEA is looking to expand and recruit allies to its cause, and much of the growth has come from word of mouth.

Anthony "Romeo" Payne is one of the volunteers. Payne, who is gay, has dealt with his fair share of bigotry. When he became aware of IDEA and its mission, he knew it was his calling.

"I just wanted to be a part of something bigger than myself," Payne said. "The way that this group is that I admire the most is the fact that we touch on more than just one subject, we touch on many, and a lot of nonprofit organizations speak on just one subject."

IDEA is always adapting and has big aspirations for its future, a transformative approach that Payne appreciates.

"Each day we are always thinking of something new you know, something else we can help out with. I'm just glad to be a part of it, and I'm glad to help make a difference and to see how big this grows." Payne said.

The reception in the community revolving around IDEA has been mostly positive, but there are still those who object to their message, sometimes violently. They have had objects thrown at them and threats of people shooting at them.

Despite the adversity, IDEA continues to spread its message.

“With any inclusion or diversity, there’s pushback,” Tierney said.

IDEA responds to pushback peacefully and counteracts it by being calm, asking questions and starting a constructive dialogue with dissenters. For IDEA, knowledge is key, and they want to help educate people on acceptance, Tierney said.

IDEA has support from local businesses, government and the police force. Spiral Brewery, The Busted Nut Bar and Grill and The Onion are among the many businesses that have sponsored the Pride Festival and stood behind IDEA.

IDEA is currently working with the City Council to usher in more education. Tierney meets regularly with Police Chief David Wilske to help bring in more perspective for diversity, equity and inclusion.

IDEA’s biggest goal is to open a community youth center to provide a safe haven for people of color and LGBTQ communities. They want to build a skate park to help sustain the youth center.

Those big plans cannot come fast enough for Tierney.

“The sooner the better, honestly. If I could, I would've started it yesterday, but realistically we’re probably looking to be able to secure a place and start building by mid-next year. With the way things are going, if a couple of things fall into place, who knows?” Tierney said.

---

Written By

Charlie Swanson

[cswanson@orourkemediagroup.com](mailto:cswanson@orourkemediagroup.com) |