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MILWAUKEE PRIDE CANCELS JUNE DATES FOR 2021. INTENDS TO MOVE TO LATER DATE IN 2021

Milwaukee, WI –Tuesday, January 26, 2021– Milwaukee Pride, Inc. - parent organization of PrideFest, Wisconsin’s largest LGBTQ+ event - announced today that it is officially canceling the four-day event slated for June. The festival was set to take place at the Henry W. Maier Festival Grounds from Thursday, June 3-Sunday, June 6, 2021. This is the second year in a row PrideFest has been canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“After much consideration, we cannot move forward with planning a June 2021 festival without knowing how and when a vaccine will be distributed throughout our community equally” said Wes Shaver, Milwaukee Pride, Inc. President. “It is still unclear as to how (or if) public gatherings will happen in 2021 and we cannot risk the health and wellbeing of our community by putting the festival ahead of the people it serves. Now, more than ever, we need to amplify the work of our community partners and increase accessibility and awareness of the many services, resources, and programs available to support LGBTQ+ people.”

Even though Milwaukee Pride is looking for later, alternative dates for PrideFest, we are committed to working with other LGBTQ+ community partners to increase visibility of the opportunities LGBTQ+ people have for their individual health, wellness, and self care needs.

“I appreciate the early decision Milwaukee Pride has made to cancel the traditional PrideFest for 2021 to ensure everyone’s safety. Although we are disappointed that we will not be able to meet in person at PrideFest, we look forward to working with Milwaukee Pride and our community partners on other ways to celebrate Pride and support our health, wellness and self-care needs in 2021” - Gerry Coon, President/CEO, Diverse and Resilient

Every year, PrideFest hosts a Health & Wellness area that’s open to organizations to showcase their programs, services, people and resources that serve the community (as well as other underserved and represented groups). While the physical space is unavailable for 2021, Milwaukee Pride is launching a digital Health & Wellness space that allows quick access to anyone. This digital platform will allow participants a FREE listing, so no cost to the organization, to participate in the state-wide directory. Milwaukee Pride IS accepting donations towards the initiative, but, this is a FREE service and opportunity.

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“When I first realized there may be rules, regulations, and guidelines for entry into a public space, I knew we would not be able to have a June festival,” said Shaver. “There are serious inequities within our community when it comes to accessibility to health care, medicine, and COVID-19 testing. The idea that, hypothetically, someone with quicker or more readily available access to health care resources could attend, while others could not- was not an option. PrideFest is a space for everyone. We cannot have any additional factors that create divides and fractures within our community.”

The Milwaukee Pride Board of Directors are working with Milwaukee World Festival Inc. leadership on possible alternate dates for later this year, hoping there’s a more clear path for hosting safe, public events. The board is also exploring the possibility of different formats and locations if the Henry W. Maier Festival Park is unavailable. Milwaukee Pride will continue to engage with the Milwaukee community on other, smaller events this summer to keep the Pride movement strong and present, adhering to all recommended and mandatory guidelines.

“We don’t want people to think there will be no PRIDE this year,” said Luke Olson, PrideFest Festival Producer and VP of Milwaukee Pride, Inc. “We simply want to ensure we’re taking the right steps forward. We hope people trust that our intentions are for the safety of the community, and for efforts for a digital Health & Wellness will continually put access at the forefront of our community efforts year-round.”

For more information, please contact Wes Shaver at wshaver@milwaukeepride.org or call 718-962-5639.

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