Hello Jeremy,

With Ogunquit, P-Town and Portland nearby, I am sure you’re no stranger to inclusive communities. With Pride Month just around the corner, I wanted to share the below story idea about an up-and-coming southern city that is now giving these LGBT destinations a run for their money!

Please let me know if you are interested in learning more about (and / or visiting) the City of Dunedin!

June is an exciting time for many in Florida and across the United States, with rising temperatures and the official start of summer. But, for one important group of people, the month brings with it even greater significance: an opportunity to express their *pride.*

June is LGBT Pride Month which serves to celebrate and recognize the impact LGBT people have had in the world. Though many cities throughout the country (and even right down the road) offer up Pride events during June, for one city on Florida’s west coast – just north of St. Petersburg / Clearwater –the celebration of LGBT pride is more than just a one-month commitment. It’s part of its DNA. Here’s how the funky beach town of Dunedin is paving the way and setting the bar for LGBT communities:

**City Ordinances and Benefits:** The City of Dunedin has added two categories – gender identity or expression and sexual orientation – to its anti-discrimination ordinance which was previously based only on race, color, religion, ancestry, gender and national origin. In addition, the City offers domestic partner benefits.

**Downtown Bars:** According to Gregory Brady, Salon GW owner and member of the Downtown Dunedin Merchants Association, though LGBT communities were once centralized around alternative bars, we are seeing this less and less. Now (and especially in Dunedin), the LGBT community seeks bars where everyone is welcome and where all segments converge. Thankfully, that’s Dunedin’s M.O. That’s not to say the City does not have one of the best alternative Bars around! Blur Night Club (a downtown hotspot connected to Kelly’s Chica Boom Room where Drag Queen Bingo takes place weekly) is a favorite for all.

**Annual Events:** Ahead of Mardi Gras each year in February, Dunedin hosts its own parade festivities as part of the City’s celebration of its vibrancy and diversity. The event comes complete with unique twists and activities, including a Drag Queen Pageant at Blur, the winner of which is the Crowned Queen of Mardi Gras.

**Weddings:** The recent legalization of same-sex marriages in Florida has assisted in attracting couples to the area and Dunedin has welcomed them with open arms. In fact, on this past Valentine's Day, the City of Dunedin partnered with Team G Events to host the weddings of six couples (one an hour) to celebrate the decision. And, with some of the state’s top wedding venues, Dunedin has happily embraced its reputation as a same-sex wedding destination all year round.

**Year Round Efforts:** Instead of hosting a North Pinellas Pride event as it has in years past, the City of Dunedin’s LGBT community will be looking ahead to January during which Diversity Week falls. There will be events benefitting Equality Florida leading up to the Week, including a Connections event in August and a family-friendly picnic in January.

“Though many of us will proudly take part in Pride events this June, we are also looking for ways to fund awareness and end discrimination for everyone, in the workplace, in housing and in our own communities,” added Brady. “It’s no longer just about parading down the streets with bells and whistles. It’s about building and being part of a community where everyone feels safe and accepted, every day. And, that’s our charge.”

**Attracting a New Demographic:** Because of the City’s efforts and having recently being named one of the top places to retire by Where to Retire Magazine, it’s no surprise that a new group of LGBT’s are laying roots in Dunedin. According to Brady, the City is seeing an increase in Baby Boomers and early retirees who are seeking out the City due to its LGBT-friendly employment benefits and overall inclusiveness.

And that’s just the beginning. This Pride month, please consider a story on a nearby community in which diversity and inclusiveness is emphasized and celebrated year-round. I work with the City of Dunedin and would be happy to arrange interviews or a visit should you want to experience it for yourself.

Thank you for your time.

Megan

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