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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pacific Pride Foundation Supports LGBTQ+ Youth & Parents for the New School Year

Santa Barbara, Calif., Sept. 24, 2018 – Pacific Pride Foundation (PPF), providing programs and services to more than 10,000 people in Santa Barbara County, is the largest LGBTQ+ center between Los Angeles and San Francisco. PPF is also the leader in programs for LGBTQ+ youth, serving 200 kids per year with mental health and wellness programs including suicide prevention and anti-bullying, and providing them a safe place and leadership opportunities.

LGBTQ+ youth and their parents are getting ready for a new school year this month, and PPF knows the unique challenges they face. According to the 2018 LGBTQ Youth Report done by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation and the University of Connecticut¹, only 27 percent of LGBTQ youth said they can “definitely” be themselves in school as an LGBTQ person. Only 13 percent of LGBTQ youth reported hearing positive messages about being LGBTQ in their school, with only 12 percent reporting they received information about safe sex relevant to them as an LGBTQ person. And, most alarmingly, only 26 percent of LGBTQ youth reported that they always feel safe in the classroom.

One youth shared their experience: “At school, I have been bullied and called slurs by other students. When I asked the principal to help my situation, he laughed at me and told me I was overreacting. I’ve also had teachers look me in my eyes and tell me they do not support same-sex marriage and transgender people, so I find it extremely hard to trust the adults at my school because they more than likely share the same opinions.”

According to Colette Schabram, executive director of PPF, “Unfortunately, these experiences aren’t uncommon for LGBTQ+ youth in Santa Barbara County. Pacific Pride Foundation is committed to improving the lives of our LGBTQ+ youth year-round with confidential programs, services, events, and support.”

PPF hosts the PROUD Youth Group for LGBTQ+ and ally youth between the ages of 12 and 17 at both the Santa Barbara and Santa Maria locations. Both are underway for

¹https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/2018-YouthReport-NoVid.pdf?_ga=2.50192485.2528511.1536077473-2097831364.1535462989

the 2018-2019 school year, held on the second Monday of every month from 4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. in the Santa Maria office at 123 S College Drive and every Thursday from 4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. in the Santa Barbara office at 608 Anacapa Street, Suite A. Youth who attend can earn community service hours, and each meeting is completely free, anonymous, and has a drop-in format. Each meeting offers friendship, support, laughter, activities, leadership opportunities, and a safe place to process with youth from different schools and walks of life.

Parents and family members of LGBTQ+ individuals can also seek support on the central coast. In addition to the PFLAG chapter in Santa Barbara (pflagsantabarbara.org), PPF is proud to support a new Santa Maria PFLAG meeting for those located in Northern Santa Barbara County or Southern San Luis Obispo County. Community members can join general information meetings on October 15 and November 19 from 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at the Santa Maria PPF office at 123 S. College Drive to learn more and get involved.

PPF is also getting back in our local classrooms. Last year, PPF implemented the California Healthy Youth Act and trained 330 students in the Santa Barbara Unified School District on gender identity and sexual orientation to reduce stigma and increase awareness in the local community. PPF also supports more than 15 Genders & Sexualities Alliances (GSAs) throughout Santa Barbara County, and our Youth Advocate Leadership Program provides and guides GSA leadership.

For additional support, PPF also offers affordable family, couples, and individual counseling with counselors specializing in LGBTQ+ topics. For parents, PPF provides a clinical therapy group for parents of LGBTQ+ children to process any grief, joys, or questions about the gender journey of their child of any age. This group is held on Wednesdays from 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. beginning Oct. 2 at the PPF office in Santa Barbara. Community members interested in counseling or joining a clinical therapy group can call 805-963-3636, extension 103, or email counseling@pacificpridefoundation.org.

To learn more about youth programs at PPF, visit pacificpridefoundation.org/youth. For more information about counseling at PPF, visit pacificpridefoundation.org/counseling or pacificpridefoundation.org/counseling/clinical-therapy-groups.

PPF is the largest LGBTQ+ center between Los Angeles and San Francisco, serving all of Santa Barbara County, and partnering with more than 60 other educational and nonprofit agencies to create a thriving and visible LGBTQ+ community and prevent the transmission of HIV and HEP-C. PPF provides services and programs to more than 10,000 clients in the inclusive and diverse LGBTQ+ community including youth programs, elder programs, counseling services, sensitivity trainings, community events, and advocacy on LGBTQ+ issues.

PPF directly prevents the transmission of disease through its HIV/AIDS and HEP-C testing and prevention outreach and education, delivering 1300 free tests in the past year. PPF is the leader in programs for LGBTQ+ youth, serving 200 kids with mental health, suicide prevention, and anti-bullying programs, while providing them with a safe place and leadership opportunities. PPF is addressing the opioid crisis through the only clean needle exchange program in the county, which collects about 100,000 used needles every year, and

distributing Narcan kits, which have saved 133 people from potentially fatal overdoses in the past year.

For more information or to make a donation please visit <https://pacificpridefoundation.org>