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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pacific Pride Foundation Hosts LGBTQ+ Youth Conference and Prom featuring Ryan O’Connell, Author & Netflix Star

Santa Barbara, Calif., Jan. 24, 2020 – Pacific Pride Foundation (PPF) provides programs and services to more than 10,000 people in Santa Barbara County and supports local LGBTQ+ youth with activities and resources year-round. Programs include regular youth group meetings in Santa Barbara and Santa Maria, summer leadership opportunities, in-school academic and social support, and the annual Youth Connect Conference and PROUD Prom.

In its seventh year, Pacific Pride Foundation’s Youth Connect Conference and PROUD Prom will take place at the Deckers Brands—whose portfolio includes UGG®, Koolaburra by UGG®, Teva®, HOKA ONE ONE® and Sanuk®—global headquarters in Goleta, California on Saturday, Feb. 15. There, LGBTQ+ youth and allies from throughout the Central and South Coast will experience a day of impact and celebration.

The event begins with the Youth Connect Conference at 2 p.m. and features workshops and activities to empower youth activism, develop community resilience, and foster strong social justice networks. This year PPF is also proud to host keynote speaker Ryan O’Connell: author, comedy writer, and star of the Netflix series “Special”. “Special”, based on O’Connell’s memoir “I’m Special: And Other Lies We Tell Ourselves”, is loosely based on his upbringing, growing up with cerebral palsy, discovering he was gay and navigating through his 20s. A Ventura native, O’Connell will join other local LGBTQ+ community members to speak and answer questions for the 300 youth expected to attend from as far as San Luis Obispo and Ventura counties.

Following the conference, teens will attend PPF’s PROUD Prom from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. with a live DJ, performances by local transgender and drag

performers, and surprises galore! This event is FREE for teens of all identities and genders and includes dinner and workshop materials.

“Our Youth Connect Conference is a heartwarming, unique event in our community for LGBTQ+ teens to develop leadership skills and meet their peers from other schools and towns,” said Colette Schabram, executive director of PPF. “This kind of environment and connection is crucial for our local LGBTQ+ youth. With LGBT students in Santa Barbara County schools reporting being bullied twice as much as their non-LGBT peers, this event, along with our year-long youth programming, increases safety and decreases stigma for LGBTQ+ teens on the Central Coast.”

Youth can RSVP at tinyurl.com/InterestedInPROUDProm. Adults interested in volunteering can visit the same link. For more information please contact LGBTQ+ Program Manager Patrick Lyra at 805-963-3636 x102 or patricklyra@pacificpridefoundation.org.

Pacific Pride Foundation (PPF) is the largest LGBTQ+ center between Los Angeles and San Francisco, serving all of Santa Barbara County. It partners with 35 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 300 kids with mental health, suicide prevention, and anti-bullying programs, while providing them with a safe place and leadership opportunities. PPF is also addressing the opioid crisis through the only clean needle exchange program in the county, which collects about 100,000 used needles every year, and by distributing Narcan kits, which have saved more than 300 people from potentially fatal overdoses in the past year.

For more information or to make a donation please visit pacificpridefoundation.org.