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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Pacific Pride Foundation Hosts LGBTQ+ Youth Conference and Prom featuring Judy Shepard**

**Santa Barbara, Calif., Feb. 4, 2019** – 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 sixth year, Pacific Pride Foundation's Youth Connect Conference and PROUD Prom will take place at Deckers Brands world headquarters in Goleta on Saturday, Feb. 23. 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 2:00 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 Judy Shepard: author, human rights advocate, and founding president of the Matthew Shepard Foundation. The driving force behind The Matthew Shepard Act, which expanded the federal hate-crime law to include crimes based on gender and sexual orientation, Judy has committed herself to empowering audiences to embrace human dignity and diversity through local outreach and advocacy. PPF is honored to bring her story to the youth in our community.

Following the conference, teens will attend PPF's PROUD Prom from 5:00 to 10:00 p.m., with dance music, 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 rich, unique opportunity for LGBTQ+ teens to develop leadership skills and connect with peers from other schools and towns," said Colette Schabram, executive director of PPF. "With half of

LGBTQ+ youth in California reporting being teased or bullied because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, and 28 percent threatened with physical violence at least once because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, our event will increase safety and decrease stigma for our LGBTQ+ teens.”

Youth can RSVP at [tinyurl.com/PROUDProm](https://tinyurl.com/PROUDProm). Adults interested in volunteering can register at [tinyurl.com/PROUDAdult](https://tinyurl.com/PROUDAdult). For more information please contact Patrick Lyra at 805-963-3636 x102 or [patricklyra@pacificpridefoundation.org](mailto: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 200 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 90 people from potentially fatal overdoses in the past year.*

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