The Colorado Health Foundation™



Building Capacity and Increasing Impact: Scaling the Mountain of Isolation

Fostering meaningful connections with others is central to good health, a truth that holds great significance for individuals who have experienced marginalization and may have struggled to form relationships with others like themselves. In the Vail Valley, to ensure that the region's LGBTQ+ community has opportunities to build strong connections and to raise awareness of LGBTQ+ issues among the wider community, advocates formed Mountain Pride.

Connection and awareness-raising are at the core of the organization's history. In 2020, Britny Rose, a local transgender woman, organized a Pride event in Eagle County to unite the community. Britny's efforts led to the formation of a Pride event planning committee that later gave rise to Mountain Pride—the multifaceted nonprofit organization that exists today. Madison Partridge, the organization's executive director, explained, "We deliver life-changing and life-saving programming through our core program areas of education, community, advocacy and resources. We're here to address a lack of resources in our community and to combat the isolation that queer folks might face in small mountain towns."

To enhance the organization's capacity and impact, in 2022 Mountain Pride welcomed its second staff member, Orlando Ortiz, as the community engagement manager. With this added capacity, the organization has expanded the reach of its mission. "With Orlando on board, we're able to be at more events and reach more folks in the community," said Madison. "In addition to connecting folks with resources, our presence at events really gives queer folks in the community a sense that they are not alone. They feel supported and seen."

Beyond event participation, with additional capacity, Mountain Pride has also expanded its focus on the region's Latinx LGBTQ+ community. Orlando has played a pivotal role in these efforts, working closely with Latinx families. "Our goal is to celebrate and engage our Latino LGBTQ+ community," explained Orlando, who understands the unique challenges arising from the intersection of cultural and LGBTQ+ identities. "Through gatherings, we provide a sense of community, aid and support, and aim to dismantle oppressive ideals ingrained in our traditional ways, while preserving our history and culture so we may thrive in our community," he added.

Mountain Pride also provides educational opportunities and raises awareness among the wider community. Madison elaborated, "We offer comprehensive LGBTQIA+ educational opportunities to promote acceptance of one's identity and to help the broader community recognize their implicit biases and microaggressions toward LGBTQIA+ individuals." They also ensure that parents have access to the tools they need to provide their LGBTQ+ children with love, understanding and acceptance.

Despite its newness, the organization has already substantially impacted the region. In its first year, Mountain Pride provided over 5,200 meaningful touchpoints to over 3,000 individuals. "We aim to ensure that Eagle County and the surrounding mountain communities are a more inclusive and compassionate place for all," said Madison.

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David Proper