

I'm so pleased to be Mayor of a City that jubilantly supports the dignity and self-worth of our LGBTQ+ community and proudly flies the Pride flag.

We gather this year filled with hope after a traumatic year, and a traumatic four years, especially thankful to be together in person.

We gather to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community with so many of you:

City Councilor Holly Ryan, among the county's first openly transgender elected officials. and an effective and persistent voice for decades working for equality across the state;

Brooke Foucault Welles and the Human Rights Commissioners;

Linda Walsh and Shin-Yi Lao "LOUD without the D" of the Newton Health and Human Services Department and Lt. Bruce Apotheker of the Newton Police Department.

Also with us this evening is Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler, Newton's community engagement specialist in our Planning

Department. Nevena is working on Zoning Redesign and this summer she and the Planning team are trying to learn as much as they can about Newtonians' vision for our village centers. She's here because she wants to hear from *everyone*, including, specifically, members of our LGBTQ+ community. She is pulling together a focus group exclusively for our LGBTQ+ community. Interested? After the program, introduce yourself to her.

Fifty two years after the Stonewall Uprising which sparked a liberation movement, and 51 years after the first Pride flag was flown and after 5 decades plus of struggle, sacrifice, political victories and violent protests, we stand together here still in the midst of another time of struggle – yet still hopeful, hopeful that we together will do the vital work necessary to bend the arc of justice.

We are here tonight to fly the Pride flag knowing that across our country fundamental LGBTQ+ rights are being challenged and acts of violence, bullying and harassment abound.

Right now, as I speak, there are more than 125 bills before state legislatures seeking to take healthcare away from transgender children.

Right now, transgender girls are being denied an opportunity to play schools sports.

We **must** move forward.

We will do the critical work together here, in the good City of Newton, where our Pride flag flies as a symbol of the spirit of inclusivity, pride, unity and celebration for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer people of our community.

I'm so pleased to introduce this year's award recipients who demonstrated extraordinary resilience and commitment to LGBTQ+ lives in Newton and beyond.

- Our Student honorees are the Co-founders and editors of Sunbow Zine, an online creative space for young LGBTQ+ artists and creators to connect and to explore themes relating to identity, the environment, and social justice.
 - **Ella Bailey** (she/her) is an 18-year old artist from Newton and editor-in-chief of Sunbow zine;

- **Rachel Sontheimer** (she/her) is a 19 year old storyteller from Newton and managing editor of Sunbow zine;
- **Zoe Goldstein** (she/her) is an 18 year old writer from Newton and writing editor of Sunbow zine;
- "Despite and because of the pandemic, school closures, systemic racism, and political unrest in Newton and around the world, Ella, Rachel, and Zoe persisted and created an online place for followers, artists, writers and creators of Sunbow to be their authentic selves.'

- Our Adult honorees are LGBTQ+ healthcare providers at Newton-Wellesley Hospital.
 - This year, more than ever, has shown us how fortunate we are to have world-class healthcare available right here in our community. All of our honorees are part of the Newton-Wellesley Hospital staff who went above and beyond the call of duty to keep our community safe, healthy, and well-informed this year. Moreover, in a period when even basic LGBTQ+ healthcare is under attack around the country, we are so fortunate to have healthcare providers who are proud members of the LGBTQ+ community and work personally *and*

within the Hospital to provide thorough, compassionate, and non-judgmental care to LGBTQ+ community members.

- Our Honorees hold many different positions within Newton-Wellesley, including serving as a doctor, nurse, mental health counselor, Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Program Manager, physical therapist, chaplain, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion coordinator **and includes Dr. James Bartz, Sandy Cho RN, Chasia Haberman, Erin Miller, Yoshi Schonborn, and Dr. Gayler Weaver**
- Speaking on behalf of the group is **Sandy Cho, RN.**