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PRESS ADVISORY

Governor Matt Meyer to Mark National Honor our LGBTQ Elders Day

Proclamation recognizes local trailblazers Peter Schott and Dr. Boden Sandstrom

DOVER, DE — Governor Matt Meyer will join advocates and community leaders on Thursday, May 14th, to sign an official proclamation recognizing National Honor our LGBTQ Elders Day in the State of Delaware. The Proclamation underscores the state's commitment to celebrating the pioneers who fought for equality long before the modern movement took hold.

The proclamation honors our LGBTQ+ elders who fought for equality long before the movement took hold. It is intended to honor the resilience and contributions of all LGBTQ+ elders across the First State. This year, the Governor will offer special recognition to two distinguished Delawareans: Peter Schott, a veteran political strategist and co-founder of the Delaware Stonewall PAC, whose legislative expertise was vital to the passage of the state's marriage equality and non-discrimination laws; and Dr. Boden Sandstrom, a trailblazing audio engineer and ethnomusicologist who broke barriers as a co-founder of Woman Sound and has spent her career documenting the history of women-identified music.

"Our LGBTQ+ elders are the living history of our progress," said David Mariner, Executive Director of Sussex Pride. "They lived through eras of profound discrimination and yet stayed the course to build the community we enjoy today. It is important to remember that these elders paved the way for many of the rights we now take for granted. By honoring them, we acknowledge that our current freedoms were won through their courage and persistence."

National Honor our LGBTQ Elders Day, which officially takes place May 16th, was established to draw awareness to the unique experiences and challenges faced by older members of the LGBTQ+ community. Many of these individuals survived the Stonewall era, the HIV/AIDS crisis, and decades of legal exclusion. The day serves as a call to action to ensure that as this generation ages, they receive the respect, specialized care, and community support they earned through a lifetime of advocacy.

Dr. Boden Sandstrom is a trailblazing figure whose career bridges the worlds of professional audio engineering, feminist activism, and academic ethnomusicology. In 1975, she shattered industry glass ceilings by co-founding Woman Sound, the first woman-run sound company in the United States, providing the

technical backbone for the burgeoning women's music movement and landmark events like the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. Beyond the soundboard, she transitioned into academia, earning a Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology from the University of Maryland, where she served as a long-time lecturer and technical coordinator. Her legacy as a cultural documentarian is further cemented by her work as co-producer of the award-winning documentary *Radical Harmonies*, which chronicles the history of women-identified music. Throughout her multifaceted career—from engineering for artists like Lily Tomlin to receiving the American Musicological Society's Philip Brett Award—Sandstrom has remained a dedicated advocate for gender equity and the power of sound as a tool for social change.

Peter Schott is a prominent LGBTQ+ advocate and seasoned political strategist who has spent decades advancing civil rights at both the national and state levels. Following a distinguished 25-year career as a staff assistant in the U.S. House of Representatives, Schott leveraged his extensive legislative expertise to help organize the National Stonewall Democrats, serving as an influential member of its national board. After moving to Delaware, he became a foundational figure in the state's LGBTQ+ political landscape, co-founding the Delaware Stonewall PAC in 2002 (Now Stonewall Delaware) to champion the election of pro-equality candidates. His strategic lobbying and community organizing were instrumental in the successful passage of Delaware's landmark non-discrimination, civil union, and marriage equality laws. A former member of the State Human Relations Commission, Schott remains a vital voice for the LGBTQ+ community in the Mid-Atlantic, continuing to document and drive social progress through his activism and writing. Peter currently serves as the vice-chair of the Delaware Democratic Pride Caucus and a board member of Speak Out Againsts Hate (SOAH).

Sussex Pride:

Sussex Pride works to celebrate, strengthen, and support the LGBTQ+ community in Sussex County and the state of Delaware, working through a social justice lens. We focus on arts & culture, health & wellness, social and support groups, and advocacy for our community.

Sussex Pride Aging

Sussex Pride Aging is a dedicated initiative of Sussex Pride designed to foster community, support, and advocacy for LGBTQ+ older adults living in Sussex County, Delaware. Through programs like the Friendly Visitor Program, monthly coffee talks, and specialized support groups, the initiative works to combat the profound social isolation often experienced by queer seniors. These elders face a set of unique and intersecting challenges: they are significantly more likely to live alone and less likely to have traditional family support systems or children to assist with their care compared to their heterosexual peers. Furthermore, many carry the weight of historical trauma from decades of systemic discrimination, leading to deep-seated fears of "re-closeting" themselves when entering assisted living facilities or seeking healthcare. Sussex Pride Aging addresses these barriers by creating identity-affirming spaces where elders can age with dignity, share their rich histories, and access the culturally competent resources they deserve.