

New Charlotte LGBTQ History Coalition Launches to Preserve Queer History, Visibility and Community Landmarks

Charlotte LGBTQ History Coalition launches with Oleen's historic marker led by Shane Windmeyer (aka Drag Icon Buff Faye) and community leaders.

CHARLOTTE, NC, UNITED STATES, August 26, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A new grassroots coalition is working to ensure that the people, places and stories that shaped Charlotte LGBTQ+ history remain visible for generations to come.

The [Charlotte LGBTQ History, Visibility & Beautification Coalition](#) has launched as a community-driven effort dedicated to preserving and celebrating LGBTQ+ history through historic markers, public art, beautification, education and storytelling. Learn more: [VisibleCharlotte.com](#)

The Coalition brings together Charlotte LGBTQ+ community members, entertainers and advocates, including longtime LGBTQ+ activist [Shane Mendez Windmeyer](#), known nationally as drag entertainer Buff Faye, along with Charlton Alicea, David Zealy and others committed to preserving local LGBTQ+ history.

Its first major project is underway: a historic marker recognizing Oleen's, one of Charlotte's earliest LGBTQ+ gathering places.

"Oleen's is just the beginning," Windmeyer said. "Too often our gathering places disappear and



The Charlotte LGBTQ History, Visibility & Beautification Coalition works to preserve and celebrate Charlotte's LGBTQ+ history through historic markers, public art, beautification, education and storytelling.

our stories disappear with them. This is about saying: We were here. We mattered. We built community. And our history deserves to be visible."

What Is the Charlotte LGBTQ History, Visibility & Beautification Coalition?

“

Our history matters. Our stories matter. Our gathering places matter... Together, we can make sure LGBTQ+ history is remembered, visible and celebrated for generations to come.”

Shane Windmeyer, also known as Drag Queen Icon Buff Faye

The Charlotte LGBTQ History, Visibility & Beautification Coalition is a grassroots initiative working to identify, preserve and publicly recognize people, places and stories important to LGBTQ+ history in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Its mission includes historic markers, public art, beautification projects, education, storytelling and community partnerships.

As Charlotte grows, that work becomes increasingly important. Neighborhoods change. Buildings disappear. LGBTQ+ bars and businesses close. Community pioneers pass away.

Charlotte's LGBTQ+ history should not disappear with them.

Future projects may recognize LGBTQ+ gathering places, activists, organizations, drag performers, community leaders and those who supported Charlotte's LGBTQ+ community during the HIV/AIDS crisis and other pivotal moments.

Oleen's Historic Marker Approved for South Boulevard

The Coalition's first project recognizes the former site of Oleen's on South Boulevard, an important gathering place in Charlotte's LGBTQ+ history.

Oleen's opened in 1968 and became more than a gay bar. Under the welcoming message "Everyone Is Welcome," it provided a place where LGBTQ+ Charlotteans could gather, build friendships, celebrate and find belonging.

Oleen's and The Scorpio opened during the same year, helping establish the foundation of LGBTQ+ nightlife and gathering spaces in Charlotte.

Oleen's role became particularly meaningful during the HIV/AIDS crisis. At a time when people living with HIV/AIDS often faced discrimination, rejection and isolation, members of the Oleen's community raised money, cared for friends and created chosen family.

The planned marker near the former Oleen's location will make that history visible on South Boulevard. A QR code will connect visitors to additional historical information online.

While the property has not been designated an official state historic landmark, approval of the marker represents an important step in publicly recognizing the location's significance.

Community Raises \$1,040 Toward Oleen's Marker

The estimated cost to create and install the Oleen's marker is \$4,000, with \$2,000 already committed. The Coalition is raising the remaining \$2,000 from the community.

During Charlotte Pride Weekend, Buff Faye's Drag Brunch & Dinners hosted the Queen City Royalty – Pride Revue Drag Show, raising \$1,040 toward the marker.

The event brought together former and current Charlotte Pride titleholders while connecting today's LGBTQ+ community with the people and places that helped make today's visibility possible.

Windmeyer, performing as Buff Faye, plans to continue using drag entertainment and community events to raise funds and awareness for LGBTQ+ history projects.

Once the Oleen's fundraising goal is reached, additional funds will support future Coalition projects.

Shane Windmeyer and Buff Faye: Advocacy, Drag and LGBTQ+ History

For Windmeyer, the Coalition connects different parts of more than three decades of LGBTQ+ advocacy and community work.

As Shane Mendez Windmeyer, he is a nationally recognized LGBTQ+ advocate, author and educator, best known as the founder of Campus Pride and for decades of work advancing LGBTQ+ visibility, safety and inclusion.

As Buff Faye, Windmeyer is an award-winning drag entertainer and producer who has created



Oleen's Lounge, Charlotte's original gay bar, opened in 1968 at 1831 South Boulevard and became a beloved LGBTQ+ gathering place known as the "Show Bar of the South." The Charlotte LGBTQ History, Visibility & Beautification Coalition is working to preserv

LGBTQ+ entertainment and community events in the Carolinas since 2009.

The Coalition brings those worlds together around a shared goal: preserving LGBTQ+ history while creating greater visibility today.

"Drag has always been about more than entertainment," Windmeyer said. "Our drag queens, bars, gathering places, activists and chosen families are part of LGBTQ+ history. We can celebrate that history while using the visibility we have today to make sure those stories aren't lost tomorrow."

Why Preserving Charlotte LGBTQ+ History Matters

Charlotte's LGBTQ+ history extends far beyond any single building, organization or generation.

Bars and gathering places created community when LGBTQ+ people had few public spaces where they could safely be themselves. Activists organized for equality. Drag performers created visibility. Friends and chosen families cared for one another during the AIDS crisis. Organizations and individuals pushed Charlotte toward greater acceptance.

Many of those stories are no longer visible in the physical landscape of today's rapidly growing city.

The Coalition wants to change that by making LGBTQ+ history visible where that history happened and connecting younger generations with the people and communities that came before them.

Everyone Is Welcome

Echoing the message associated with Oleen's, "Everyone Is Welcome," the Charlotte LGBTQ History, Visibility & Beautification Coalition welcomes community participation.

LGBTQ+ individuals, allies, historians, businesses, organizations, longtime Charlotteans and



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newcomers can help identify historically significant people and places, contribute stories and photographs, assist with fundraising, support public art and beautification projects, or volunteer expertise and connections.

The Oleen's marker is the Coalition's first project — not its last.

"Our history matters. Our stories matter. Our gathering places matter," Windmeyer said. "Charlotte is changing quickly, which makes preserving these stories even more urgent. Together, we can make sure LGBTQ+ history is remembered, visible and celebrated for generations to come."

To learn more, support the Oleen's historic marker or get involved with the Charlotte LGBTQ History, Visibility & Beautification Coalition, visit VisibleCharlotte.com.

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