

Tulare proclaims June as LGBTQ Pride Month during emotional ceremony

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Tulare city leaders proclaimed June as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Pride Month in an emotional ceremony that brought some officials to tears.

"Recognizing Pride Month is a step in the right direction of who we are as a city and as a community," Tulare Mayor Dennis Mederos said. "To be the mayor and make this proclamation is a privilege of mine."

"The City of Tulare is committed to supporting visibility, dignity and equality for LGBTQ people in our diverse community," the proclamation reads in part. "It is essential to acknowledge that the need for education and awareness remains vital to end discrimination and prejudice."

Two Tulare natives who advocate for LGBT causes accepted the proclamation at the Tuesday meeting. They said the city "stepped up" to champion equality and support LGBT residents when other San Joaquin Valley cities remain hesitant to do so.



"This is incredible. The proclamation is beautiful. It's so wonderful to see allies drafting something like this for us. Usually, it's us proclaiming this and banging on city halls trying to get things recognized, so I really want to say thank you for recognizing LGBT Pride Month," said Brian Poth, CEO of The Source LGBT+ Center.

Poth was born and raised in Tulare. He graduated from Tulare Union High School before leaving the city to pursue a successful acting career.

He returned in 2014 to co-found The Source and advocate for LGBT people and youth in Tulare County, he said.

Brock Neeley, another Tulare-born LGBT activist and U.S. Navy veteran, also accepted the proclamation. Earlier in the night, he donated a box of LGBT-themed children's books to the Tulare Public Library.

"It makes me proud to say that Tulare is my hometown, where I grew up, I can actually come back and be proud of it," he said.

Councilwoman Terry Sayre thanked the men and The Source for their work helping individuals who have been "marginalized for way too long," she said.



"We definitely appreciate the proclamation that captures what a lot of us know and feel is right. I'm very proud to be a part of this council that celebrates this community and our city's diversity," Councilman Jose Sigala said.

The Tuesday meeting avoided the controversy and the protesters that similar discussions in Kingsburg and Fresno recently attracted.

Tulare leaders said they were pleased to see the ceremony go smoothly.

"For people who know me, my motto is 'Do the right thing.' I'm glad we did the right thing today, and we're probably the first to do it," Councilman Steve Harrell said.

[Joshua Yeager](#) covers water, agriculture, parks and housing for the Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register newspapers. Follow him on [Twitter @VTD_Joshy](#). Get alerts and keep up on all things Tulare County for as little as \$1 a month. [Subscribe today](#).