

## **Timeline of Santa Cruz County (CA) LGBTQ History**

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This timeline focuses on events, organizations, schools, policies and legislation, funding and infrastructure and communication channels that have provided a safer community and school environment for LGBT youth and all youth.

[UCSC Gay History Timeline](#)

California legislation can be [found here](#).

### **1950s**

1959 - Cabrillo Junior College established in Watsonville. In 1961, the current Cabrillo College campus was built in Aptos.

### **1960s**

1965 - University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC) established.

<https://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/oir.exhibit/timeline>

### **1970s**

1970s - Lesbian community develops through the UCSC Women's Studies program, softball teams, and various coffeehouses in Santa Cruz including the Two Sisters Restaurant on 41st Avenue, the Womyn's Coffeehouse at Mother Right Bookstore, and the gay bar, Mona's Gorilla Lounge.

1971 - [UCSC Professor Alan Sable](#) is first UCSC professor to come out to his class. Sable was denied tenure in 1977, which some suggest had to do with his coming out.

1971 - UC Santa Cruz holds first gay and lesbian conference entitled "Homosexuality: Exploring an Alternative in Sexual Expression." 120 attendees.

1971 - UCSC informally forms first gay student organization known as the [Gay Student Union](#) (GSU).

1974 - Santa Cruz Women's Health Collective established the Santa Cruz Women's Health Center. Some of the women active in the collective were Kater Pollock, Erika Bisgyer, Zeisel Saunders, Linda Wilshusen, Robin Baker, and others.

1974 - The Amazon Music Project (AMP) Festival, one of the first women's music festivals in the country, takes place in the Santa Cruz Mountains. 1500 women attend. Gwen Avery performs.

1974 - The first gay and lesbian organization in Santa Cruz County, the Lesbian and Gay Men's Union (LAGMU) forms as a club at Cabrillo College. Some of the founding members were Jude Iverson, Dan Dickmeyer, Larry Friedman, Shawn Laughingtree, Arthur Corbin, David Paine, Brian Williams, Joe Eugene, Dan Eberhart. The LAGMU speaker's bureau eventually morphed into Triangle Speakers.

1974? - Sandy Stone and Christina Floyd form Trans Sisters to present women's music concerts

1975 - [Santa Cruz Pride](#). Third oldest Pride in California organized by LAGMU members based at Cabrillo College. Originally called a "rally" for rights. Over a week, workshops took place at Cabrillo College, Lou Harrison provided a concert, Pat Smith (now Patti Maxine) performed, picnic took place in San Lorenzo Park that included a tug-of-war across the San Lorenzo River. 200 attendees. [Vote by the Board of Supervisors](#).

1975 - UCSC students form the Gay and Lesbian Alliance (GALA).

1975 - Santa Cruz County became the first county in the United States to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation for its civil service employees **(Note: Need verification of this)**

1975 - Gays Over Forty Collective established with monthly potlucks. This group was co-founded by Ray Mortz and Eugene and was still active and became a Diversity Center group in 1999 and then part of the 60Plus Program in 2002.

1975 - Gay Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings begin in Santa Cruz.

1976 - Publication: *Rubyfruit Reader* is a newsletter published for lesbians in Santa Cruz by a small collective of writers including Kater Pollock, Zeisel and Val Loeffler .

1976 - Second Annual Santa Cruz Pride Celebration is a week-long event, including workshops at Cabrillo College, a dance with the SF all women rock band, Sweet Chariot, an Evening of Gay Music including Pat Smith and Clytia, and a picnic with games in Delaveaga Park.

1977 - Santa Cruz Pride. First parade held in downtown Santa Cruz.

1977 - *Matrix*, a women's newspaper, begins publication and continues until 1990. Claire Moore and Jennifer Meyer are key participants.

1978 - The statewide Briggs Initiative, which would have barred gay teachers, fails at the ballot box just weeks before the assassination of Harvey Milk.

1978 (November 27) - Harvey Milk, the first out gay San Francisco Supervisor is assassinated. Many from the Santa Cruz LGBT community participate in candlelight vigils in SF.

1979 - Gay Men's Group Meetings established. Met every Monday night from 7-10 at Loudon Nelson Center for several years. Facilitated by Patrick Meyer and Ken Sentner and included discussions and social time. Close to 500 different men attended over the years.

1979 - Gay [Men's Volleyball](#) established and grew out of the Gay Men's meetings. One of the oldest gay organizations in Santa Cruz. Organizers were John Laird and Ken Smith.

1979 - A gay and lesbian Democratic club, the Charley Parkhurst Lesbian and Gay Democratic Club, is formed with John Mortz as the president.

1979 - Santa Cruz Pride Parade. Attended by 600 people in downtown Santa Cruz.

### **1980s**

1980s - Santa Cruz Area Radical Faeries group formed. The group helped support LGBT youth programs.

1980s - PFLAG Santa Cruz established.

1980 - [Closet Free Radio Collective](#) established by UCSC on KZSC FM 88.1. One of the oldest LGBT radio shows in the U.S. "[Closet Free Radio](#)". Over the years, hosts include Gilbert Moreno, John Laird, Ron Sampson, Vern Isakkson, Toni Cassista, Pat Rutherford, Merrie Schaller, Natalie Steinberg, Artemis Elanor, Jeffrey Flanzbaum, Kim Seidl, Gryphon Blackswan, Mr. Tim, Kai Azada, Richard Baldwin, Mike Johnson, Ban Buckler, Frank Garcia, Maria Perez, Jorge Bru, Rebecca Adams, Tracye Lea Lawson, Gloria Nieto, Ricardo MacKee, Jack Tilney, Blissah, Ranka Milosevich, and many more.

1981 - John Laird is elected to the Santa Cruz City Council as an openly gay man. Becomes mayor in 1983 - one of the first openly gay mayors in the U.S.

1981 - A Gay Men's Chorus is formed under the direction of Brett Sherman. They performed at Kuumbwa, at "A Gay Evening in May" and other community events for about 3 years.

1982 - [Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County](#) established.

1982 - UCSC Professor [Nancy Stoller Shaw](#), one of the first out lesbian professors at UCSC, is denied tenure. After 4 years of legal filings with the University of California, she wins a legal battle and returns in 1987.

1983- UCSC includes sexual orientation in its non-discrimination policy

1983 – High Tech Gays, a silicon valley social and activist organization forms and welcomes Santa Cruz County members. About a dozen Santa Cruz citizens, including John Laird, became members. John was the keynote speaker at two meetings during the 1980s.

1984 - Tracye Lee Lawson starts Lea Lawson Productions, bringing women's music performers and comedians to Santa Cruz for 17 years.

1984 - Freedom Democratic Caucus - a local gay and lesbian Democratic Club is formed. The Freedom Democratic Caucus newsletter becomes the predecessor to the Lavender Reader - which is what the newsletter transitioned to when the caucus faded as an organization. It dropped its Democratic label and became the Lesbian and Gay Action Alliance.

1984 - The Bay Area Municipal Elections Committee (BAYMEC), a political action group advocating for LGBT civil rights in Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Benito and Monterey Counties. John Laird is one of the first board members.

1985 - Santa Cruz AIDS Project (SCAP) established. Became a national model that was profiled by the New York Times. The organization grew out of community meetings set up by the Freedom Democratic Caucus about what the community response to AIDS should be. The first six men that formed the Board of Directors are all gay men - three of color - Gerald Landers, Ray Martinez, Jerry Solomon, Wesley Harris, Sean Wharton, and John Laird. Terry Cavanagh was the first employee, and Gerald Landers was the first Executive Director. (Jo Kenny was the second, and John Laird was the third. John Leopold also served as the SCAP Executive Director.)

1985 - A Gay Evening in May (AGEM) variety show held yearly. It is produced as a fundraiser for the Santa Cruz AIDS Project (SCAP) and later other local LGBT projects. It takes place first at UCSC but soon moves to the Civic Auditorium and is the biggest social event for the LGBT community besides Santa Cruz LGBT Pride. Continues until 2002.

1986 - HerBooks, a lesbian feminist press, is founded by Irene Reti

1987 - Publication: *Lavender Reader*, a gay and lesbian publication in Santa Cruz County.

1988? The Santa Cruz City Council becomes one of the first California local governments to adopt an HIV non-discrimination ordinance.

1988 - Lesbians of Color Alliance formed at UCSC.

1988 - Community meetings held in 1988 at various homes and at the Loudon Nelson center represents the beginning of the [Diversity Center](#) and the first lesbian and gay community center gatherings.

1989 - The County of Santa Cruz approves domestic partner benefits.

1989 - UCSC Gay Lesbian Bisesexual Network resource center established.

1989 - On February 6, 1989 the Lesbian and Gay Community Center (known today as [The Diversity Center](#)) was established as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit to serve the LGBT community. In early 1990 the LGCC opened doors to the public on Commerce Lane, a small alley behind Pacific Avenue. Some of the people involved in the early planning stages were: Mindy Storch, William Russell, Allison Clarke (of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance), John LaRiviere (organizer of the first meetings at Loudon Nelson), Jo Corone, Lee Roden, Christopher Spillers.

1989 (March 4-6) - The AIDS Memorial Quilt is displayed at the Civic Auditorium. Known then as "The NAMES Project," 350 panels or four percent of the total quilt was on display. Santa Cruz sewing group including Tom Letchworth, Tony Shearer, Nana Montgomery and others add quilt panels to the larger quilt that include Santa Cruz men who had died from AIDS.

### **1990s**

1990 (Feb) - Italian feminist and film theorist Teresa de Lauretis coined the term *queer theory* for a conference she organized at UCSC.

1990 – Vito Russo, an LGBT activist and film historian teaches a course at UCSC entitled "Documenting Gay Activism."

1991 - [Triangle Speakers](#) / speakers bureau established by volunteers to educate people about LGBT stories and people. Some funding from the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County LGBT Partnership fund.

1992 - Santa Cruz City Council passes the "Santa Cruz Anti-Bias Ordinance" including sexual orientation and gender identity in jobs and housing. Other cities pass similar ordinances throughout Santa Cruz County.

1993 - Proud Voices established by Santa Cruz AIDS Project as a support group for LGBT Youth.

1993 - Herland Bookstore is established and serves as an important resource for the LGBT community, including LGBT Youth. [Closes in December 2004.](#)

1996 - First Gay Straight Alliance established in a Santa Cruz high school and was called the "Rainbow Alliance" (At Santa Cruz High School). [Santa Cruz GSA List.](#)

1996 - First Gay Straight Alliance established in Watsonville at Salud Para La Gente resource center and was called the "Gay and Proud" (Near Watsonville High School).

1997 - The Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County established the LGBT Partnership fund (renamed the [Diversity Partnership Fund](#) in 2005) to benefit LGBT and social justice outreach. In 2005, through community fundraising, \$1 million was raised by the LGBTQ community to permanently endow the fund. Every year, about \$40,000 in grants are awarded. One of the first diversity endowments like this in the U.S.

1997 – Triangle Speakers, a volunteer organization since 1991, became a non-profit 501(c)(3) in June 1997. The initial Board consisted of Cynthia Druley, President; Bonnie Garvin, Treasurer/Secretary; Carla Holt, Director; Liz Ryan, Director, and; Jennifer Pesek, Director.

1997 - UCSC [Lionel Cantú Queer Center](#) established for support of LGBT students. Deb Abbott was the first Executive Director.

1997 - [Queer Youth Task Force](#) established by social workers.

1997 - School District GLBT Family Task Forces established in Santa Cruz City Schools District and Pajaro Valley Unified School District to promote anti-discrimination and safe campuses for staff and students.

1997 - Community Television began broadcasting various LGBT events which continued in the future.

1998 - [Queer Youth Leadership Awards](#) (QYLA) established by the Queer Youth Task Force. Some funding from the Community Foundation LGBT Partnership fund and support from the Santa Cruz Area Radical Faeries and sponsored by the [Community center](#).

1998 - UCSC Lionel Cantú Queer Center and a local high school host one of the first LGBT youth conferences.

1998 - Santa Cruz County Mental Health establishes training program about sexual orientation and gender identity for clinicians, therapists and social workers (Transgender Training).

1999 – The Lesbian and Gay Community Center ([Diversity Center](#)) officially, under mutually agreed rules, and under their 501(c)(3) umbrella, became sponsor of the Lesbian and Gay Chorus, Santa Cruz Radical Faeries Youth Projects, the Youth Task Force, Lea Lawson Productions Publisher of La Gazette, and Manifesto (a monthly publication), Queer Youth Leadership Awards (QYLA) and others.

1999 - UCSC Lionel Cantú Queer Center established first queer high school youth program to end isolation for youth.

1999 - UCSC: first transgender student was hired in a paid position as the Transgender Programs Coordinator at the GLBT Resource Center.

## **2000s**

2000 – California Law Passed: California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act (AB 537, Kuehl). This law added new forms of protections in California schools including actual or perceived sexual orientation and actual or perceived gender identity. ([More Info](#); California Department of Education [AB 537 Task Force Report](#) (2001))

2001 – “The [Diversity Center](#)” officially becomes the new business name for the community center. The official non-profit name remains the “Santa Cruz Lesbian and Gay Community Center”. The board members during this period (1998 - 2001) were: President - Denny Carroll, Secretary - Paul Pratt, Treasurer - Bob Correa, Directors at large: KC Bly, Mardi Brown, Todd Burlingame, Steve Everman, Karin Hinsén, Tom Larson, Ray Mortz, Lorena Orozco, Peter Weyzen.

2001- Queer Youth Task Force and [Diversity Center](#) partner together in receiving a grant from the Community Foundation LGBT Partnership fund to hold a day long conference entitled “Meeting the Needs of Queer Youth” that brought together leaders from law enforcement, education, faith based communities, and community organizations.

2001 - [Queer Camp](#) established in summers for queer youth. Funded and supported by Santa Cruz Area Radical Faeries, Community Foundation LGBT Partnership fund and The [Diversity Center](#).

2001 The [Diversity Center](#) moves from Commerce Lane to 177 Walnut Avenue in Downtown Santa Cruz.

2002 - The First Executive Director is hired by the [Diversity Center](#): Bob Correa (first ED of the center, 2002 to 2005), Gypsy Powers (2005 to 2006), Bob Correa (temporary ED 2006), Amy Wirth (2006 to 2007), Jim Brown (2007 to 2012), Sharon Papo (2013 to present)

2002 – The [Diversity Center](#) Senior Program, called [60Plus](#), is Created bringing Hundreds of Seniors Together. The First Senior Luncheon social was Held in April 2003 with 75 people attending.

[Rob suggests deleting this] 2003 A survey of the LGBTQ Senior Community was done by the [Diversity Center](#) 60Plus program. Funding was from the County Foundation LGBT Partnership fund.

2003 – California Law Passed: Comprehensive Sexual Health Education Law (SB 71, Kuehl). This law required that all materials and instruction in grades 7-12 be age-appropriate, medically accurate, and objective for students of all races, genders, sexual orientations, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and students with disabilities. ([Ca State Dept of Education](#); [Fact Sheet](#))

2003 - UCSC Regional History Project produces stories of LGBT people in Santa Cruz County. Publication: [Out in the Redwoods](#).

2004 - [Safe Schools Project](#) of Santa Cruz County established by the Queer Youth Task Force to help schools implement AB 537, the California Student Safety and Violence Protection Act.

2004 - [Out in Our Faith](#) established. Coalition of religious communities of SC County. Some funding by the Community Foundation LGBT Partnership and Temple Beth El Jewish Community Center.

2005 - [Trans\\* Teen Project](#) established by Queer Youth Task Force for support of transgender youth

2005 - [Planned Parenthood](#) established the Transgender Healthcare Program

2005 – The Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County “LGBT Partnership fund” is renamed the “[Diversity Partnership Fund](#)”. The LGBTQ community raised \$1 million to fund the endowment. Every year, about \$40,000 in grants are awarded. This is one of the first LGBTQ endowments like this in the U.S.

2005 – In October the [Diversity Center](#) moved to 1117 Soquel Ave which becomes a permanent home after the 2018 purchase of the building at 1115 and 1117 Soquel Ave.

2007 - California Law Passed: California Safe Place to Learn Act (AB 394, Levine). This law specified the State’s responsibilities to keep schools safe and fight bias and harassment in schools by requiring the State Education Department to monitor anti-discrimination and harassment policies in schools. ([More Info](#))

2007 - California Law Passed: The Student Civil Rights Act (SB 777, Kuehl). This law protects students from harassment and bullying in public schools by making sure teachers and school administrators must afford all persons in public schools equal rights and opportunities regardless of their gender identity. ([More Info](#))

2008 - Watsonville Pride takes place

## **2010s**

2010 - [Transfamily Support Group](#) established by Santa Cruz therapists in support of families of transgender youth.

2011 - California Law Passed: Fair, Accurate, Inclusive and Respectful (FAIR) Act (SB 48, Leno). This law required schools to provide general instruction and textbooks that include information on the contributions of "...lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans, persons with disabilities, and other ethnic and cultural groups" particularly in the area of social sciences. The act also added sexual orientation and gender identity to the state's existing anti-discrimination protections that prohibit bias in school activities, instruction and instructional materials. ([More Info](#))

2011 - California Law Passed: Seth's Law (AB 9, Ammiano). This law, named after Seth Walsh, a young gay man who took his life because of bullying requires School Districts to adopt an anti-bullying policy and establish a process for investigating bullying complaints. ([More Info](#))

2012? - Triangle Speakers merges with and becomes a program of the [Diversity Center](#) with help from a grant from the Community Foundation.

2013 - California Law Passed: California Law Passed: School Success and Opportunity Act (AB1266, Ammiano). This law affirmed that transgender youth have the opportunity to fully participate and succeed in schools across the state. ([More Info](#))

2013 - Radio Show established, "[Out in Santa Cruz](#)" (KSCO Radio). [Facebook Page](#).

2014 - California Law Passed: California Law Passed: LGBT Cultural Competency for Health Care Providers (AB 496, Gordon). This law clarified that existing cultural competency training for health care providers (including school nurses) should include discussion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues. ([More Info](#))

2015 - California Law Passed: LGBT Inclusive Sex Education (AB 329, Weber). This law updated the state's sexual health and HIV prevention curriculum to provide instruction that is comprehensive and inclusive of LGBT people and their families. This legislation ensures that all students have access to medically accurate and unbiased sexual health education. ([More Info](#))

2015 - California Law Passed: Help Teachers Combat Bullying and Support LGBT Youth (AB 827, O'Donnell). This law encourages schools to give teachers tools and resources to support LGBT students and create safer school environments. ([More Info](#))

2016 - The first [Pajaro Valley Pride](#) takes place in Watsonville ([News Story](#))

2016 - Big Brothers Big Sisters establishes [Trans Youth Mentoring Program](#)

2016 - Safe Schools Project earns Community Foundation Diversity Partnership grant to educate history teachers about LGBT history. [More Info](#).

2018 - The [Diversity Center](#) purchases the building at 1115 and 1117 Soquel Avenue, Santa Cruz, becoming a permanent home for the LGBTQ+ community center.

[Rob added in the items below]

2020 - Covid pandemic strikes across the U.S. and the world.

June Pride event is virtual. <https://santacruzpride.org/view2020>

2021 - The Santa Cruz County Office of Education officially raises the rainbow flag for the first time in May to celebrate Harvey Milk's birthday. Most school districts across the county have ceremonies to do the same. The tradition continues each year after this. The Santa Cruz County Office of Education was the second county office to raise the rainbow flag in the state.

2021 - The Cherry Pit drag show performs for the first time at the Blue Lagoon under the leadership of Eli Torres, Suki Berry, Jacob Ayumi and Jordan Fickel. This ushers in a new culture of drag and drag performers across Santa Cruz County. [Good Times article](#).

2022 - The Queer Youth Leadership Awards celebrates its 25th Anniversary. <https://qyla.org/>

2022 - The 47th Annual Santa Cruz Pride parade and festival takes place again for the first time after the pandemic in partnership with the Santa Cruz MAH and Abbott Square. [Good Times article](#).

2023 - Santa Cruz MAH and Faris Sabbah were named Grand Marshall's of the Pride Parade.

## **References**

"[Identity Shift](#): How the LGBT Community Found its Place in Santa Cruz." Good Times Newspaper. April 21, 2015.

Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History / [LGBT Artifacts](#) (Dan Dickmeyer Collection)