



**Building a rural community where our
LGBTQ+ community can thrive.**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dandy Knopf, Site Director of Friendly City Safe Space
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Shenandoah LGBTQ Center Welcomes New Site Director at Friendly City Safe Space

(Harrisonburg, VA.) — Dandy Knopf (they/them) has been selected as the new Site Director of the Friendly City Safe Space (FCSS), the Harrisonburg program location of the Shenandoah LGBTQ Center, a non-profit with a mission to strengthen the Shenandoah Valley LGBTQ+ community through advocacy, education, programs, and development of safe spaces. Knopf assumed their new role on February 10th, 2025 and follows Safe Space’s outgoing Director, Peregrin Sanchez.

Friendly City Safe Space opened its doors to the public on November 6th, 2021 and is located on the second floor of the Ice House on South Liberty Street. It was founded by Hyacinth Bellerose, alongside a Leadership Team of dedicated community members and volunteers. Friendly City Safe Space offers drop-in hours, free counseling services, a community clothes closet, queer lending library, and food pantry. The space hosts a diversity of affinity group meetings and social events and partnered programming with local organizations.

Knopf joins Friendly City Safe Space with a degree in Sociology from James Madison University and over four years of experience in founding and sustaining their local business, Deviant Kreations. Alongside their partner, Phoenix, they have worked to create an unapologetically queer space where people feel seen, respected and uplifted. “As the Site Director, my goal is to continue that mission by further strengthening the queer community in the Harrisonburg and Rockingham County areas. I aim to build relationships, increase awareness, and expand support. I firmly believe in the power of community and the importance of listening to the diverse voices and intersectional lived experiences of our neighbors and peers.” Knopf said.

Knopf’s appointment comes during a time when our LGBTQ+ communities are feeling much uncertainty and fear with increasing attacks from the new administration. “Dandy is a creative, a business owner, and someone with deep connections to our community,” said AnhThu Nguyen, Executive Director of Shenandoah LGBTQ Center, “and their gifts are critical right now. Our immediate focus is to engage and mobilize folks through active listening and collaborative creation to build the necessary support for our community at this time.”

Planning for upcoming community conversations and meet-and-greet is currently underway. Knopf says, “Together, our voices and actions can create meaningful change – both locally and nationally. A song I love says, ‘*Our hearts are a muscle the size of a fist, keep loving, keep fighting!*’ (Ramshackle Glory).”

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