



# 2019 Philadelphia Trans Wellness Conference Educates and Empowers

The Mazzoni Center hosts the 19th annual event from July 25 to 27.

July 2, 2019 By [Mark S. King](#)

---

Amede Bennett, the events coordinator for the [Mazzoni Center](#) in Philadelphia, has gotten used to negotiating pronouns, and they are happy to share their expertise.

“When I meet someone I usually say, ‘Hey, I’m Amede, and I use they and them pronouns. What pronouns do you use?’ And if they say ‘they and them,’ I respond ‘oh, I identify as nonbinary, how about you?’”

Amede makes it feel easy, even if a lot of people are still getting comfortable with a more inclusive social landscape that includes people who identify differently than themselves. Even among allies, the new vocabulary of gender might still be new.

“Sometimes people just don’t know about pronouns,” Amede said. “It’s a thought they have never had to navigate.”

Fortunately, the Mazzoni Center in Philadelphia has been on the cutting edge of HIV and LGBT health and wellness for decades, and it is through the organization’s sponsorship of the [Philadelphia Trans Wellness Conference](#) (PTWC) that Amede was able to develop their skills and put them to use. Amede’s experience with the agency is a great example of how a strong community-based organization can foster and maximize talent.

Amede began their community work as a volunteer for the annual conference, now in its 19th year. “The more I started to work with the conference, I started figuring out myself,” Amede said. “It was a journey of realization for me. I was able to meet other trans and nonbinary people, and I saw myself in them. I realized that this is who I am, really.”

The mission of PTWC, according to the Mazzoni site, is to “educate and empower trans individuals on issues of health and well-being; educate and inform allies and health service providers; and facilitate networking, community-building, and systemic change. We strive to create an accessible and respectful environment that is inclusive of diverse gender-identities and expressions as well as inclusive of diverse opinions and ideas.”

PTWC is now the largest trans-specific conference in the world, attracting an estimated 10,000 attendees in 2018.

In 2019, over a three-day period from July 25 to 27, the conference will provide workshops on both a general and professional track. Advance registration is recommended, but attendees can also register on site. The Mazzoni Center will also have free testing for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections available each day of the conference.

“The general track is free to the public,” Amede explained. “And there are workshops for people who are not trans, such as workshops for parents with a child who is transitioning. We even have meetups for various groups and sober spaces.”

“The professional track provides continuing education credits, where you can learn about the latest professional issues — legal issues, medical issues — among trans people. That track has a registration fee. We get a fair amount of providers and allies who attend to learn how to take care of the trans community.”

Education for allies is especially important, Amede said, and they are willing to use their own experience as a way to inform others. “I always knew something was different about me, but I never had the language or the words,” Amede said. “I don’t believe I fit into a strictly masculine or feminine role. I don’t fit either of those binaries. I don’t believe in the strict male and female gender systems that we currently use. You should never assume anything about anyone. You should always ask. Just do it in a polite and caring way.”

In a marginalized and sometimes dangerous world for gender-nonconforming people, the PTWC offers a compassionate safe haven for attendees. “A lot of these folks don’t have much of a family or community outside other trans people,” Amede explained. “That’s why we call this event a homecoming. It’s a family reunion, a place to go without having to hide or be killed. That’s why this is so important.”

The city of Philadelphia has embraced the event, with support from the mayor’s office and a raising of the trans flag at city hall each year during the event. In fact, the City estimated that the conference had a \$3.3 million impact on the city last year.

Politics and the legal system continue to play a role in the lives of trans people. In Pennsylvania, you can still be fired for being LGBT. The issues of employment and financial security weigh heavily for many trans and nonbinary people.

“Even when they do find a job, their insurance may not be trans competent,” Amede explained. “So that adds extra cost to everything.”

The PTWC tries to offset costs for attendees as much as possible. Besides free registration for the general track, “pay what you can” lunches are provided each day, and the resource hall is populated with trans business owners, lawyers and medical providers ready to assist however they can.

Working on the conference hasn't simply given Amede the language to properly describe themselves. "If I come across someone who is trans and needs help, I can provide them with legal services," Amede said. "I am usually able to forward them to the care that they need."

"But it's even more than that," Amede added. "This conference has provided me with a community I would have never had if I wasn't involved."

Go to [MazzoniCenter.org](https://MazzoniCenter.org) for more information on the [PTWC](#) or to register. POZ is the 2019 PTWC national media sponsor.

---

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

<http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/2019-philadelphia-trans-wellness-conference>