My First Sober Pride Spent Parading Around [VIDEO]

My first sober New York City Pride changed my life thanks to Miss Hell's Kitchen and the untampered enthusiasm I felt in the Pride Parade.

August 28, 2018 By JMV

As I write this, I'm perched on a stool at Kohi Coffee in Provincetown, easily the best coffee around. My cold brew sits to my left, and a few crumbs remain from my blueberry scone on a white rectangular plate. Depeche Mode plays in the background, and each time I look up I see a wooden boardwalk surrounded by flower pots and sand. The blue sky is visible with clouds far in the distance, a few wisps overhead. There's a lesbian couple with their two dogs strolling along the water's edge. The ripples in the ocean come toward the shores with the light breeze, and all is calm and free, but there's still so much excitement.

The serenity I have today is far beyond anything I could have imagined during my first few weeks of sobriety. Back in June 2014, sobriety represented a new life and a new energy. I was still around a lot of friends who were drinking and I was only twenty-four years old. I was so sure that I could still have fun and be sober. I remember Pride approaching as I had been sober only one week and I was feeling so good. I didn't want anything to do with drugs and alcohol. I was so happy being free.

It was Sunday, June 29, 2014, and very warm outside in the morning as I walked to Thirty-Eighth Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues to be on the Miss Hell's Kitchen float for the Pride Parade. I had choreographed some short numbers to about four pop songs to perform to for the march; the dancers were rehearsed and ready to hit the streets. There were drag queens and friends, and the DJ geared up to make us celebrate all afternoon. I was giving you high kicks and leaps, glitter being tossed. Everyone was so happy, and for the first time, I had an inkling of what Pride was about. It wasn't about the drinking for me anymore. I felt alive.

I was with a large group of people. I hired the dancers and the go-go boys. I was being responsible, and I was partially in charge of a float for a pageant that benefits a bike ride for HIV Awareness, researching, and resources. I was doing this and was present for each and every moment without running away, trying to escape from the fear of success.

After the parade, I cut straight to work at the restaurant on Eighteenth Street and Eighth Avenue. I walked into a packed dining room with a line out the door. There was a drag queen hosting and a

DJ spinning from a mirrored box booth in the middle of the room. I went to get dressed in my red button down shirt from Express and dark skinny jeans. I tied my apron and sashayed onto the dining room floor lip syncing each song that played as I served cocktails and food to the patrons; at one point, my manager told me to take it down a notch. I looked at him with amusement and sass and replied, “It’s Gay Pride in the gayborhood, and I will be celebrating that with each and every person. Let’s have fun.” He smirked at me and nodded as I continued to strut the long runway between the tables and the bar.

Life felt more simple in that moment. I was so happy, and I was so care-free. I had the enthusiasm of a child. I looked around, and the colors were so vibrant. I had been self-medicating for so long, and now I was reborn. My eyes were wide open; more importantly, my heart was wide open.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/first-sober-pride-spent-parading-video