



William Chandler Craig waves a flag as the 3rd annual Pride Parade rolls through the Square in Oxford, Miss. on Saturday, May 5, 2018. (Bruce Newman, Oxford Eagle via AP)

Oxford set for 4th annual Pride Weekend

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For years the LGBTQ community in Oxford wanted to have their voices heard and a chance to celebrate life. After much hard work and organizing the city helped put together a Pride weekend, and this year's fourth annual celebration takes place this week.

Events started on Thursday night and will run all through the weekend, weather permitting.

Friday's events include a LGBTQ Alumni and Friends luncheon that begins at noon at the Inn at Ole Miss. The Ole Miss Alumni Association and the University of Mississippi collaborated with the Oxford-Lafayette community to put together the first annual Ole Miss Alumni LGBTQ Reunion. Every member of the community, whether they identify with them or not, is welcome.

"Pride week for me is seeing the community in its entirety," Blake Summers said. "Seeing the LGBTQ+ groups, local businesses and churches intertwine to make Oxford a beacon of hope is hugely inspiring. Pride is about being proud of identities and culture, but I am so proud of our town. I have so much love for all allies in Oxford."

Later in the day at the Ole Miss student union is the 4th Annual Lavender Graduation Ceremony from 4 to 5:30 p.m. The Lavender Graduation is an event that recognizes achievements and contributions of the LGBTQ students who successfully navigated the college experience.

The centerpiece of the weekend is the Oxford Pride Parade. The parade starts and ends at the University Depot parking lot, works its way down University Avenue to the Square then back to the Depot. More than 100 people are involved, ranging from high school groups to community organizations. The parade draws a crowd that fills the Square as parade members celebrate.

"Having Pride in Oxford means that we still have hope in our community," Sketer Grisham said. "It means we have a place to be loved and to teach love to all people. It really made me a little more proud to live here and to tell others about our home when I travel and meet other LGBT individuals around the country."

The parade will begin at 2 p.m. and last for around an hour. Those who are participating in the parade will need to be lined up starting at 1 p.m. in the Depot lot.

To cap off Saturday's festivities is the Saturday Night Drag! at the The Lyric. The party begins at 7:30 p.m. and will last until 1 a.m. as partygoers will experience a drag queen show including GoDiva Holliday of Tupelo.

Sunday features a softball game and picnic event at Avent Park from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be a community softball game with a cookout and kid activities to bookend the weekend's events. The softball game will feature Memphis' Cotton Row Uniques against Oxford's Isom J-Hawks.

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