



## **Transgender Information & Empowerment Summit (TIES) 2019 Overview**

On October 19, 2019, Equality Virginia hosted the 6<sup>th</sup> annual Transgender Information and Empowerment Summit (TIES). This unique conference is designed to address the needs and interests of transgender and non-binary Virginians of all ages as well as their friends, family members, partners, and allies! TIES 2019 offered a variety of programming to serve the community.

It was the largest-ever TIES conference with 475 attendees, 38 workshops, 38 volunteers, and 65+ community partners. 53% of attendees were transgender or non-binary, 40% were family members, parents, or partners, and 21% were people of color. [Check out photos](#) from the event here.

**Workshops** are designed to inform attendees and build community connections

- Offered 38 workshops on topics from suicide prevention, healthcare access, voting rights, an advocacy bootcamp, supporting trans youth, and so much more! Check out our [full schedule and workshop descriptions here](#).
- Hosted a plenary panel on advocacy in Black transgender communities.
- Engaged over 45 community members as workshop presenters, facilitators, and plenary panelists.

The **name and gender marker change clinic** provides transgender and non-binary Virginians with free legal assistance regarding the process of obtaining updated identity documents, which can be a burdensome and confusing process.

- 36 transgender and non-binary adults and youth made an appointment at the clinic.
- More than two dozen attorneys and law students learned the ropes of name and gender marker update processes in Virginia and offered pro bono assistance. This was possible due to partnership with the University of Richmond School of Law and the Virginia Equality Bar Association (VEBA).

**Mental health and medical consultations** allow transgender and non-binary Virginians to have a free conversation with a trans-affirming mental health or medical provider about resources and healthcare options. For some people, especially those outside of urban centers, this may have been their first time talking with a trans-affirming provider.

- 14 people made an appointment at the Wellness Center.
- 10 healthcare providers engaged from across Virginia.
- Over two dozen people stopped by the Wellness Center Information Table to get basic questions answered and get connected to resources.

**HIV and STI testing** empowers attendees to be informed on their status

- 17 people accessed a free, rapid HIV test through Nationz Foundation.

**A Clothes Closet** provided by the Transgender Assistance Program of Virginia offered transgender and non-binary attendees with thousands of free gender-affirming clothing items available to browse and try on in a safe space.

- Over 50 attendees stopped by the Clothes closet
- Side by Side offered their supply of chest binders for free, and provided consultations to several community members to ensure they could get a properly fitted chest binder.

**Community connection** is one of the highlights of TIES by bringing Virginians together and connecting them to other trans folks, family members, partners, and allies!

- 56 community organizations spread the word about TIES
- 30 community organizations had booths at TIES
- 120 people contributed to an interactive community art project with attendees sharing posting stick notes about their love for TIES onto a pair of life-size wings in the color of the transgender pride flag.
- Well over a dozen young people stopped by the Youth Corner, managed by a partner organization (Side by Side), to connect with other youth in a fun, social space that centered them.
- Nearly 100 people attended the post-TIES social event that offered light refreshments and beverages. Attendees stayed up to two hours after the conference to catch up with old and new friends, enjoy food, and be in a space with other trans people and allies.
- For the first time ever, TIES offered a POC (People of Color) Lounge where attendees of color could take a break in a safe and engaging space to build community, have fun, and relax.
- Dozens of attendees took advantage of the opportunity to play games, enjoy being outside, and meet new people at the Outdoor Activities center.
- TIES offered Spanish language interpretation for workshops, with 5 people using the service.

### **Hear from attendees what they liked about TIES 2019:**

“I am constantly amazed at the organization, quality of presenters, the level of the info and the deep sense of community fostered at each TIES event.”

“1. Awesome atmosphere... super good vibe! 2. Awesome volunteer staff ! Good signs and maps, and people offering directions. 3. gorgeous venue 4. Lots of interesting workshops!”

“Information, seeing distant friends, interactive workshops.”

“The open and nonjudgmental conversations that I held with everyone at the booths and in the workshops. I felt that as an ally I could ask questions without awkwardness.”

“Meeting others in the same boat as me and learning from them and attending seminars to learn as much as possible.”

“Everything, it feels like a family reunion!”



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“I LOVE that it’s free and in Richmond. It’s also well rounded.”

“As an ally with a transgender family member, one of the things I really like about VA TIES is the positive atmosphere throughout the day. I know that some of the sessions discussed difficult and sensitive topics, but there seemed to be an overall sense of joy and freedom among many attendees.”

“Being around other trans folks and GNC people is affirming and safe”

“The workshops were helpful and informative and provided information that will be useful to me moving forward.”

“Good spread of topics offered at different times, so I was able to select some top priorities and most didn’t overlap with each other. The Clothes Closet was amazing! I volunteered there for a few hours and the selection and quality was absolutely awesome.”

“I learned a lot related to my own experiences this time; next time I’m interested to go to workshops aimed at a broader spectrum of the community. I also found out that even the topics that I judged as not interesting seemed a lot more enticing when I asked people about them afterwards. I also made a very good friend and we’re still hanging out! “

“It's the only event all-year that I feel like I can be totally myself and around all queer folx, at such a scale.”

“Very empowering, great sense of community.”