

Knoxville PrideFest 2012



Mayor Madeline Rogero, center, joined Vice Mayor Nick Pavlis, Deputy to the Mayor/Chief Policy Officer Bill Lyons, Deputy to the Mayor/Chief Operating Officer Eddie Mannis and Councilman Finbarr Saunders in walking in the Knoxville PrideFest Parade in Downtown Knoxville on Saturday, June 23, 2012. After the parade, Mayor Rogero also spoke at the PrideFest Festival on Market Square.

Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero Remarks at Knoxville PrideFest Knoxville, TN June 23, 2012

I am so glad to be here with you today. I want to thank the organizers, the corporate sponsors, the churches, and all those people (gay and straight) who are here today to show their support for equality.

I want to recognize my two Deputies to the Mayor who are with me today, Eddie Mannis (Chief Operating Officer) and Bill Lyons (Chief Policy Officer). I also want to recognize two city councilmen who walked in the parade with us today – Vice Mayor Nick Pavlis and Councilman Finbarr Saunders.

Diversity and inclusion was an important theme of my campaign – from the staff, volunteers and donors who were actively engaged -- to the message that I routinely delivered.

In my inauguration address just 6 months ago, I asked: What makes a great city?

I said that day, as I did throughout the campaign, that I believe a great city opens its arms and gathers into its midst the diversity of its people --from white collar to blue collar; from labor to management; from every neighborhood north, south, east, west, and downtown; people of all races and colors; people of all abilities; gay and straight; people of all faiths; from the youngest to the oldest; from the richest to the poorest.

We built our campaign on diversity and inclusiveness and that is how we will govern.

During my 31 years in Knoxville, I have seen a culture change for the better.

We are building a culture of respect for each other, a culture of openness, a culture of participation, a culture of inclusion, and most importantly, a culture of confidence in who we are and optimism in what we can be. We believe in ourselves and in our ability to become a better community.

As Mayor of Knoxville, I am determined to stay focused on these core values and on the strategic priorities that will make our city stronger and sustainable.

I have purposefully and strategically put together a very diverse and inclusive leadership team and, with city council, we have begun to tackle these issues head on.

That's why in April I introduced a nondiscrimination ordinance that would ensure that the city did not discriminate in its hiring and employment practices on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

I am so proud that city council passed this ordinance with a 9-0 vote. In our city hall, it's OK to say Gay!

And how could we do otherwise? When I look out into this crowd, I see the faces of Knoxville.

The LGBT community is made up of bankers, lawyers, clergy, teachers, professors, students, doctors, nurses, musicians, artists, realtors, business owners, police officers, firefighters, corporate executives, journalists, elected officials, government workers, tradespeople, librarians, wait staff, athletes, secretaries, techies, nonprofit executives --- and more.

I see people who are contributing daily to the vitality, the economy, and the leadership of our great city.

To marginalize such a group – to discriminate against such a group - not only destroys their God-given human spirit but it cheats ourselves, our city, our state, and our nation from realizing the contributions, the solutions, and the leadership they have to offer.

Corporate America knows this and is embracing equality.

As a wife, mother, and grandmother, when I look out into this crowd, I also see our children --our sons and daughters—our grandchildren, our brothers and sisters, our moms and dads, our friends and neighbors.

I see people who drive me crazy! I see people who inspire me. I see people who challenge me to be better every day.

I see people who love Knoxville and want exactly what I want – a job in which we can provide for our families, a neighborhood in which we can feel safe, a healthy environment in which we can enjoy a high quality of life, and a beloved community to which we can contribute our talents, our passions, and our time.

So whether you approach diversity, equality, and inclusion from a practical and economic perspective (from the head and wallet) or because you are driven by your heart and faith, we all have an important role to play.

I believe we all are entrusted with an opportunity and an obligation to leave Knoxville a better place than we found it – a stronger, safer, healthier, and more equitable city.

For many years, I have been challenged by the words of Martin Luther King who talked about leadership and how we change society for the better.

He used the analogy of thermometers and thermostats. (And I will paraphrase this a bit...)

He said that most people are like **thermometers** that record or register the temperature of the majority of opinions, rather than the **thermostats** that transform or regulate the temperature of society.

Let's all strive to be the thermostats in Knoxville that transform the temperature of our great city for greater diversity and inclusion.

Let's each be the compassionate collaborator that strengthens relationships, supports diversity, and creates a sense of belonging.

And let's remember that all of us are Knoxville, and Knoxville will only become greater if all of us are involved, included, and respected.

Thank you and have a great festival!