

## **THE PRIDE VOICES CONTEST GUIDELINES 2026**

### **Purpose:**

The Pride Voices Contest creates a platform for our diverse community to share their stories through creative writing. Selected works will be featured during our sixth annual Pride Flag Raising Ceremony, celebrating the vibrant spirit of our community.

### **Eligibility:**

The Pride Voices Contest is open to residents of Novato ages 13 years and older.

### **Prompt:**

Through poetry or prose, share what it means to be accepted, strengthened and/or celebrated – for yourself, your loves ones, and our community.

### **Contest Rules & Judging Criteria:**

Entries must address the theme of the prompt. Submissions can be either poetry (30 lines maximum) or prose (350 words maximum) to accommodate the 2-3 minute speaking time.

Entries must be based on the writer's own personal ideas or experiences, not biographies of historical figures or other people's stories.

No photos or images included in the submission.

Submissions must be appropriate for a community-wide celebration and public ceremony. The content must not include profanity, vulgar language, discriminatory language, hate speech, content that promotes violence or harm, explicit sexual content or references, or any other material deemed inappropriate for a public ceremony. The City of Novato, at its sole discretion, may determine submission eligibility to ensure content aligns with the celebratory and inclusive spirit of this gathering. All submissions should contribute to an atmosphere of respect, acceptance, and community celebration.

Entries are judged on the basis of clearly expressed, creative ideas, with an emphasis on clarity, creativity, and originality. Correct usage of basic grammar, structure, and writing skills are also considered.

Staff will review all submissions and select up to five entries that best meet the contest criteria for the Commission's consideration. The Multicultural Advisory Commission (MAC) will then choose up to two winners. These winners will be invited to share their work at the sixth annual Pride Flag Raising Ceremony on Monday, June 1, 2026. Winners may present their work themselves at the Pride Flag Raising Ceremony or have their work read by a City staff member or MAC Commissioner. Additionally, one selected winner will have the opportunity to accept the Pride Month proclamation at the June 9, 2026 City Council meeting. The City will respect and accommodate any requests for anonymity throughout the Pride Voices Contest process.

### **Use of Copyrighted Material:**

Participants must ensure that all pieces submitted to the Pride Voices Contest are entirely their own original work. The use of copyrighted material is not acceptable in any submission. Public places, well-known products, trademarks, or certain other copyrighted material may be included if they do not try to establish an association between the applicant and the trademarked material.

**Rights and Permissions:** By submitting an entry to the Pride Voices Contest, participants grant the City of Novato permission to publish their work on the City website, social media platforms, and other City communications. Winners' submissions may be featured in City materials related to Pride Month celebrations and future Pride events. Author's names will only be published with explicit permission. The City is committed to respecting and accommodating any requests for anonymity.

**How to Submit:**

Submit entries via the form at [novato.gov/pridevoices](http://novato.gov/pridevoices). Include your name, age, address (to verify Novato residency), phone number, and email address along with your submission.

Participants may indicate their preference for anonymity when submitting their work online. If anonymity is requested, the City will not publish the author's name alongside their submitted work. However, name, age, and address are required at the time of submission to verify eligibility, specifically age and Novato residency, and to allow City staff to communicate with the author regarding the contest.

**Deadlines:** Submissions will be accepted starting March 9, 2026, and close April 10, 2026. Winners will be contacted April 27, 2026 by City Staff.