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tucson MEET OUR makers

In Tucson, we celebrate Pride all year long - but especially in June, when global LGBTQ+ celebrations take center stage, and again during our own Pride Weekend, happening November 21–23. And who better to spotlight than the legendary Tony Ray Baker, who has dedicated his life to promoting inclusivity in the community. Keep reading to learn more about him, plus, don't miss the latest media updates from Tucson at the link below.

[What's New in Tucson](#)

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COVER STORY

TONY RAY BAKER

During Pride Month, we're highlighting Tucson's Tony Ray Baker, recently described by a friend as a true "renaissance man." The forward-thinking, entrepreneurial Tony Ray is the visionary behind GayTucson.com, a co-owner of Tucson Trolley Tours and The Tucson Gallery, and a real estate agent who specializes in helping LGBTQX individuals find their dream homes in Tucson – just a few of his many business ventures. Most recently, he added "author" to his growing list of titles.

Fueled by a cultivated sense of optimism and a passion for community activism – instilled in him at a young age by his late mother, whom he describes as a devoted community builder – Tony Ray has always worked to share Tucson's vibrancy with people from all walks of life, especially the LGBTQX community.

Throughout his career, he's helped challenge misconceptions about Tucson's LGBTQX-friendliness, cataloguing welcoming businesses – first in a little black book, then on GayTucson.com, and most recently through an app he developed.

Always pursuing his passions, Tony Ray remains both a student and a teacher, constantly learning and giving back by teaching marketing and AI to realtors and small business owners of all ages.

The following interview with Tony Ray was conducted at The Tucson Gallery in May 2025.



How do you celebrate Pride Month in Tucson?

I celebrate every day of my life.... At 14, when I decided to come out, I thought: *I'm going to let this man (my adopted father) down. He chose me; he didn't choose this.*

Fortunately, my parents had always taught me to be true to myself, so I knew I had to tell him...

So, I told them, and it was the coolest thing, because... my dad said, "Tony Ray, you're my son... I'll give you away to the man of your dreams. Just be true to yourself and take care of others..." And that moment... was a moment of change for me...

I always knew I had my mom's support, but now... I knew for a fact that this man was not abandoning me... and I could go forward and do anything I want in life, because my parents have made it very clear they're behind me all the way. And so, I've always

felt like I've always been the authentic me, and I celebrate that gift of Pride every day...

My team also helps others celebrate Pride... Our latest blog on GayTucson.com is about some of the bigger gay pride events that you may want to know about... and we also highlight those in our Gay Tucson newsletter. We celebrate by helping others celebrate and making sure that they know all the cool stuff out there and things to do. And by giving that constantly, all year long, we celebrate Pride. It's not just June for me, and it's not just October for me – it's all year, helping the LGBT community.

Why have you chosen to call Tucson home?

That's a great question... My partner and I leave the country for a month every year, and we've seen many countries... We only take a backpack. We jump on trains, and we get to see the world in a whole different way... We travel like locals.

And it's funny – because of all the places I've visited in the United States and abroad, I always still feel this rooted connection to Tucson... Even when I lived in California after high school to go to college – I could have stayed. It was, you know, the dream to live in California at that time.

But I still always felt that the connection was back in Tucson.

And as I look at it today, and people ask why, I always realize: to me, it's the true melting pot. It's what America is supposed to be about...

One of our neighbors is a couple from Iran. Then one neighbor down the street is a couple from Britain. The couple next door is from Mexico. Next to them is a lesbian couple. We have a gay couple, a Harley Davidson rider and his wife... and then two families with kids... That entire group will get together and have a barbecue in someone's backyard. It's fantastic. And that's the epitome of Tucson – completely different groups, from all different worlds, all getting together, having a barbecue, hanging out, sitting around a bonfire...

I think that's what Tucson is to me. It's always been that eclectic mix, where everyone's welcome – and we all have hope for a stronger community.



Where is your favorite place to shop in Tucson?

There's a secret little place... it's The Seasoned Woman... and it's this beautiful, little,

perfect boutique shop. Everyone should know that place, because... it's curated to cater to women.

For art, I particularly like this place called The Tucson Gallery (*laughs, because he owns it*), because it features all local artists ... And I'm a man who walks the walk—if you were to walk through any of my houses, they're all filled with local art from these artists...

I also love that little place, Old Town Artisans.

Where's your favorite place to eat in Tucson?

I think, the most exquisite Ethiopian food... is Zemam's on Broadway... There's nothing like that restaurant... The spices are brought in from Ethiopia.... If I'm going to a steakhouse, I absolutely love Charro Steak downtown... Those guys are always on point. For Mexican food, I am in love with Calle Tepa, which is a.... little, tiny place in the strip mall... It's packed all the time, because the locals know it's the real deal.

Where's your favorite place to drink in Tucson?

Snake & Barrel. I think they make brilliant craft cocktails. The other place would be the Century Room. The kids in the Century Room make stunning craft cocktails as well... It's an art form.

What projects, personal or professional, are you working on right now?

I just finished this book, Xander Meets Javi. I wrote it. It was for my nephew... I met him at my mom's funeral last year... he was carrying a little stuffed javelina. I said, "Hi, Xander. My name's Tony Ray. I'm your uncle..." Xander (3 yrs old), threw his hands on his hips just like this (*points to the cover*). I said, "What's the little javelina's name?" and he said, "Javi," with a tone that clearly indicated that I should have known that.

Flipping through the pages.

This is his mom and dad... that's our downtown barrio house... Xander learns about saguaro cactuses and animals... then he comes home and tells the uncles what he learned...

I wanted it to look like a little old Golden Book... my mom used to read those to us...

Then... I also finished this book, which I give to clients. It talks about my history... my mom and my dad... it's a little biography of me – I like to call it an airplane read book.

And I've now just finished my third book... called The Millennial Millionaire Map. We have about 14 millennials right now who will be multi-millionaires. We coach them how to buy housing leveraging other people's money... and by the time they hit 55, they can retire or pursue another passion...



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