

individuals has experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.

"Just like the houseless community is denied a lot of rights that they should have — the trans community is a denied a lot of rights that they should have," Lugo said.

This year's Portland Trans Pride March theme is "Trans Acceptance is Life or Death."

"We wanted to choose that theme to bring that attention to people, that we want to celebrate ourselves as a community, but we're still a community that has a lot of life-and-death issues," said Leela Ginelle, an organizer of Portland Trans Pride. "And that it's important for people to understand that, to try to have compassion and think about how life could be better in their own communities for transgender people."

Forty-one percent of trans people have attempted suicide, according to Trans Student Equality Resources. Trans youths make up a large portion of this percentage, with 80 percent of trans students reporting feeling unsafe at school, a heartbreaking trend brought to national attention with Ohio teen Leelah Alcorn's death in 2014.

Trans people are also disproportionate targets of violence, as transgender women have a 1 in 12 chance of being murdered, according to Trans Student Equality Resources. For transgender women of color, that chance is 1 in 8.

This year's Portland Trans Pride March is focusing on these issues, the issues that simply cannot wait, the issues that must be faced for the sake of trans people's survival, organizers say.

"Increasing visibility is kind of a way to show people in Portland that trans people are all around them," Ginelle said. "That

could kind of make it easier for a trans student in school or a person working at a company who wanted to transition."

Having a trans Pride parade accomplishes more than increasing visibility. It also brings the trans community in Portland together. Oppression breeds fragmentation, Lugo said, and has been a barrier to the trans community working together, specifically in her experience in Portland.

"We tend to organize around politics of identity," Lugo said. "The trans men always talk to the trans men, and the trans women always talk to the trans women."

Portland Trans Unity has created an opportunity to transcend these group boundaries.

"I started working more with trans people of color and really thinking more about that issue, being intersectional and trying to be an ally," Lugo said. "What issues do trans people of color face in our community?"

Uniting trans people has also created opportunities for mentorship and community.

"It's been really exciting to teach these trans and genderqueer people how to raise money, so we can do the kind of work we want to do," said Trystan Angel Reese, a Portland Trans Unity organizer and a professional fundraiser. "There have been so many opportunities for mentorship, for skill sharing, being able to teach other people to do what we know."

Portland Trans Unity is making efforts to make the parade inclusive and welcoming to all its attendees. Not only will the speakers' words be interpreted into sign language, but thanks to feedback from

marchers last year, interpreters will march along with the parade, giving deaf people the opportunity to participate more fully.

The parade is starting in the North Park Blocks, and the organization is working with the Portland Police Bureau to ensure that people in that area aren't negatively affected by the paradegoers' presence.

Portland Trans Unity plans to extend its reach beyond the parade. There has been talk of a daylong, or even weekend-long, festival for trans people.

"I don't think we could've known the level of community support we would receive this year for trans march, both from within the trans community and from our allies at other endorsing organizations," Reese said. "I think it's very clear that there's a lot of momentum and a lot of people want us to keep doing things."

Organizers hope this parade is just the beginning and gives hope to the young people in Portland who don't see examples of trans people around them, who feel alone and who might not want to keep going.

"That's one of the reasons I really want to participate," Reese said. "People need to see us and know we exist. If you are young and trans, you should know there is a future for you."

**"Increasing visibility is kind of a way to show people in Portland that trans people are all around them. That could kind of make it easier for a trans\* student in school or a person working at a company who wanted to transition."**

**LEELA GINELLE,**  
AN ORGANIZER OF PORTLAND TRANS PRIDE



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