



# PRIDE

06

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF HOUSTON PRIDE 2006

  
**Marc Jacobs**  
HONEST, OUTSPOKEN, ON TOP OF HIS GAME

50 YEARS OF DYKE STYLE  
ELECTION 2006: THE VOTER'S GUIDE  
TEN QUEER ARTISTS WHO ROCK POP



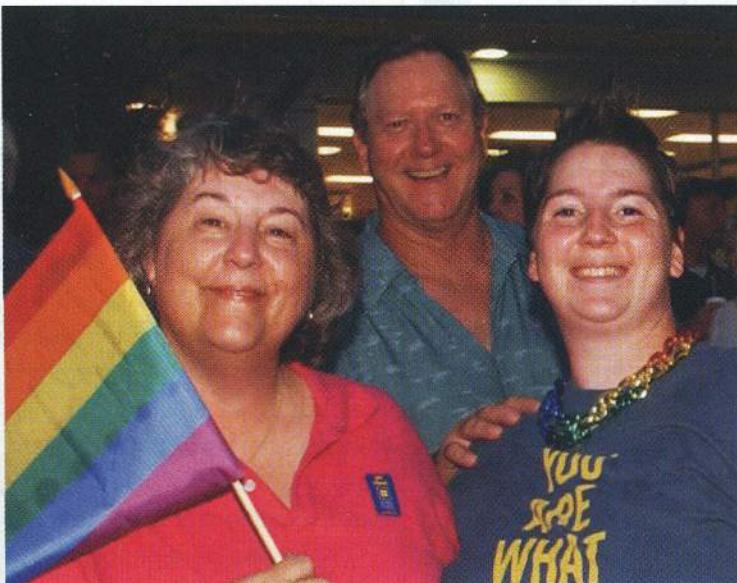
Sprint



# PRIDE HOUSTON 2006

[pridehouston.org](http://pridehouston.org)

Say it out loud!



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## PRIDE.06

### HOUSTON

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PRIDE MAGAZINE is produced every year by volunteers & the Magazine Committee of Pride Houston



Pride Houston is an energetic group of committed volunteers who meet year-round to develop, organize, coordinate and promote the Pride Parade and Festival and other annual events for our community. It is our goal to create the means by which gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons can commemorate, educate and celebrate; we build on our past while creating new paths toward a positive future for all humanity, not excluding any aspect of who we are as a people.

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We are proud to continue and to expand our popular Friends of Pride program in 2006. Friends of Pride (affectionately known as FOP) is the membership organization which provides you a way to financially support the important work of Pride Houston, while enjoying valuable benefits and events.

As a Friend of Pride, you'll receive tickets to our popular Wine Tasting event, which always held at a fabulous and exclusive location. You'll sample wines from a variety of premier wineries, and nosh on extensive appetizers, while socializing with fellow FOPs.

Friends of Pride also enjoy special VIP seating for our incredible nighttime Pride Parade. With its great location, private bar and private Porta-Potties, the VIP bleachers are truly the best seat in the house for both parade and people watching! And for donations of \$250 or more, we even offer reserved Parade/Festival day parking.

So, what's new for Friends of Pride in 2006? We'll be offering monthly social gatherings, open to the whole community. The First Ever Sing-Along Show Tunes Brunch will be held on February 26<sup>th</sup> at Ninfa's Post Oak. Fueled by Mexican breakfast and bottomless mimosas (courtesy of Barefoot Cellars), we'll surely do a fine job of belting out those show tune standards!

The monthly Friends of Pride Newsletter will keep you "in the know" about the Brunch and other upcoming FOP events. The newsletter will also feature significant discounts and special offers from our advertisers. The first annual FOP golf tournament will be held April 1<sup>st</sup> at Hermann Park, and don't you just know that we are going to have some fun with the April Fools Day theme!

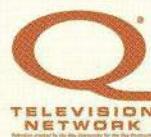
Friends of Pride is thrilled to welcome back Q Television as our underwriting sponsor. We hope you'll subscribe to this premier gay network, which is available exclusively through Time Warner Cable.

As you can see, Friends of Pride offers you a great way to support the GLBT community and have a lot of fun at the same time! To join, pick your donation level shown in the chart, and then visit our website to sign up on line: [www.pridehouston.org](http://www.pridehouston.org).

We look forward to meeting you all at upcoming Friends of Pride events!

[www.fophouston.org](http://www.fophouston.org)  
[www.pridehouston.org](http://www.pridehouston.org)

UNDERWRITTEN BY



### 2006 Membership Levels & Benefits

#### \$75 Ruby

- One pass for VIP Parade Bleacher Seating\*
- Individual recognition on "Thank You" webpage

#### \$125 Amber

- Two passes for VIP Parade Bleacher Seating\*
- Individual recognition on "Thank You" webpage

#### \$250 Garnet

- Four passes for VIP Parade Bleacher Seating\*
- One Parade & Festival day reserved parking place
- Individual recognition on "Thank You" webpage

#### \$500 Topaz

- Six passes for VIP Parade Bleacher Seating\*
- One Parade & Festival day reserved parking place
- Individual recognition on "Thank You" webpage

#### \$1000 Emerald

- Eight passes for VIP Parade Bleacher Seating\*
- One Parade & Festival day reserved parking place
- Individual recognition on "Thank You" webpage

#### \$1750 Sapphire

- Ten passes for VIP Parade Bleacher Seating\*
- Two Parade & Festival day reserved parking places
- Individual recognition on "Thank You" webpage
- Business recognition on "Thank You" webpage

#### \$2500 Amethyst

- 12 passes for VIP Parade Bleacher Seating\*
- Two Parade & Festival day reserved parking places
- Individual recognition on "Thank You" webpage
- Business recognition on "Thank You" webpage
- Fee waived for Parade float entry\*\*
- Fee waived for Festival booth\*\*
- Business logo on Pride Houston website

\* VIP Parade Bleacher Seating includes private restroom and cash bar

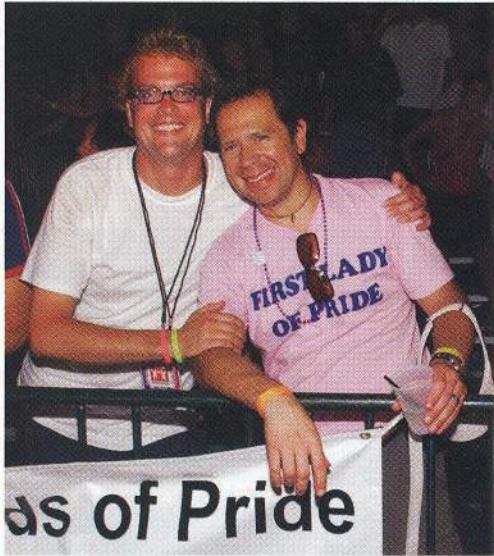
\*\* Deadline June 14, 2006



# Catch the Spirit & Volunteer!

You, too, can help shape the history of Pride! You can volunteer your time to help Houston celebrate our heritage, our diversity and our community. Moreover, you can volunteer for as little as one hour a week or just on Parade and Festival Day. You can commit to as much or little as you like. The volunteer opportunities with Pride Houston are as diverse as the community we serve.

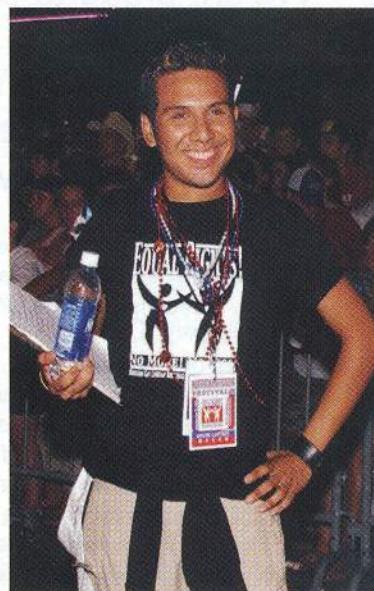
To find out more about how you can volunteer, visit us on the web at [www.pridehouston.org](http://www.pridehouston.org), email us at [info@pridehouston.org](mailto:info@pridehouston.org) or call the PrideLine at 713-529-6979. Volunteer and make an impact on history!



Nick Brines - Pride Houston President  
Greg Decker - "First Lady" of Pride



Ruth Ann Ethridge - Pride Houston Outreach  
Peggy Roush - Pride Volunteer



Alexa Ramirez - Pride  
Houston Merchandise  
Kevin Laudadio - Volunteer



*"If we have the opportunity to be generous with our hearts, ourselves, we have no idea of the depth and breadth of love's reach."*

- Margaret Cho



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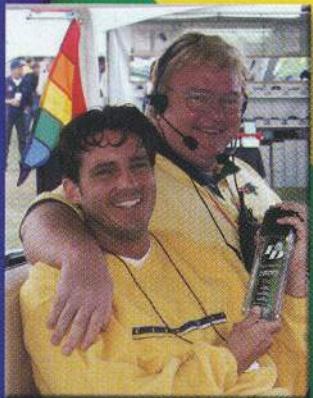
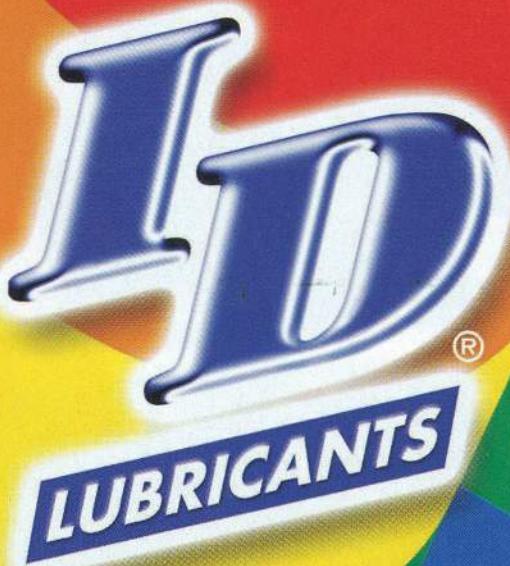
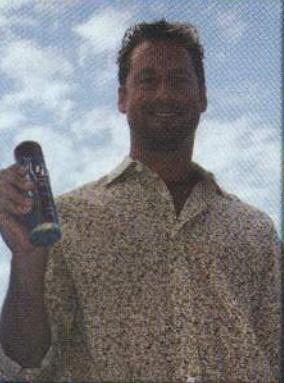
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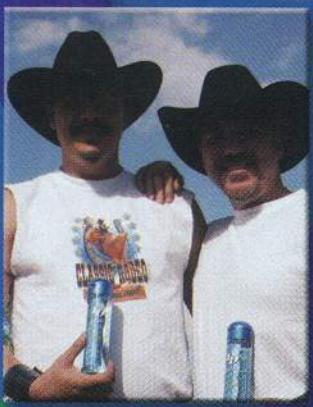
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visit [www.pr](http://www.pr)

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For a free sample call 1-800-646-2096 or visit our website at [www.idlube.com](http://www.idlube.com)



# 2006 Pride Events

Following are just a few of the dozens of events sponsored by a variety of GLBT community organizations that will be held in June as a part of Houston's Pride Celebration.

For complete event listings, check the Pride Houston website at [www.pridehouston.org](http://www.pridehouston.org).

**Saturday, June 3, 2006 -**

An Art Affair - Houston GLBT Community Center

For the second year, the Community Center will present a silent and live auction of works of art by local artists (GLBT talents and allies) as well as other treasures. Proceeds will benefit the Center & its programs. The evening will also include music and entertainment and food provided by community restaurants. An Art Affair is part of the Community Center's yearlong tenth anniversary celebration. More details & updates are available at [www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org](http://www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org).

6 p.m., Winter Street Studios, 2101 Winter Street



**Saturday, June 10, 2006 -**

Houston Transgender Unity Committee Pride Unity Dance

The Unity Committee invites everyone in the community for this mixer and dance. Admission: \$5. Proceeds from admissions, as well as donations, will benefit the new Peggy Rudd Transgender Scholarship Fund. For more information, see [www.houstontransgenderunity.org](http://www.houstontransgenderunity.org).

Meteor, 2306 Genesee



**Wednesday, June 14, 2006 -**

Houston NLGJA Pride

The Houston chapter of the National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association hosts an annual Pride event to meet and greet local newsmakers. Past guest speakers include Sue Lovell, Sefronia Thompson, Annise Parker and Mayor Bill White. This free event is open to all. NLGJA is an organization of journalists, online media professionals and students that works from within the journalism industry to foster fair & accurate coverage of LGBT issues. NLGJA opposes workplace bias against all minorities and provides professional development for its members. [www.nljja.org](http://www.nljja.org) NLGJA Houston contact: Oliver Dyke, [ojd@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ojd@sbcglobal.net).

**Friday, June 23, 2006 -**

GALLO (Gay & Lesbian Latin Organization) Pride Week Dance

The Noche de Gala - A Black Tie Affair will be a formal affair featuring a live band as well as a DJ. For tickets and more information call 713-710-0045 or visit [www.houstongallo.org](http://www.houstongallo.org).

**Saturday, June 24, 2006 -**

Houston Pride Festival 2006

Get to the Parade site early and enjoy the day with friends, food and fun. There will be a full day of GLBT entertainment on two stages headlined by the legendary Grammy-nominated diva, Taylor Dayne. Also featured at this year's event will be the critically acclaimed songwriter Casey Stratton, urban folk and jazz artist KJ Denhert, and rock-n-roller Dylan Rice. For more information visit [www.pridehouston.org](http://www.pridehouston.org).

2:00 - 8:00 p.m., Westheimer & Yoakum, cost: \$10



Houston Pride Parade 2006

Experience the thrill of America's original nighttime Pride Parade and the Southwest's largest Pride event as our community will "Say It Out Loud!" For more information visit [www.pridehouston.org](http://www.pridehouston.org).

8:45 p.m., Westheimer between Woodhead & Whitney



**Sunday, June 25, 2006 -**

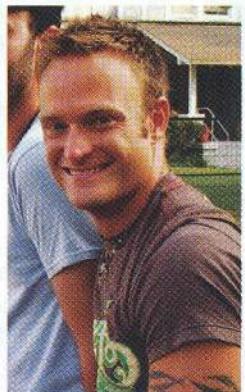
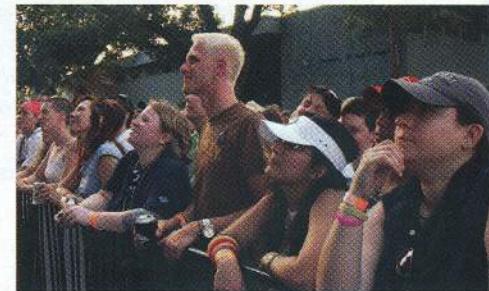
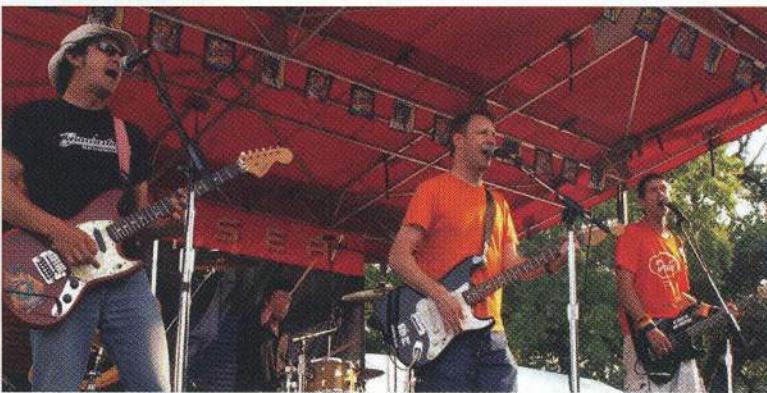
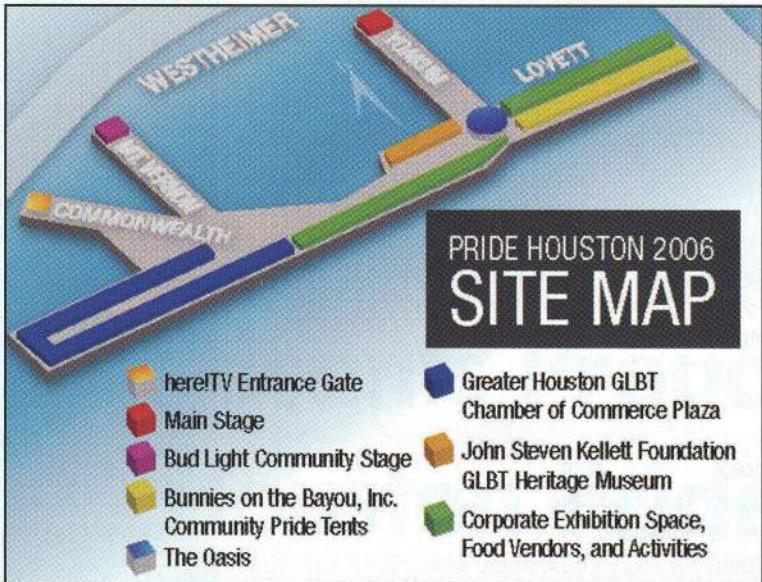
Houston Pride 2006 Parade Awards Ceremony

The award ceremony commemorates the outstanding entries in the 2006 Parade. For more information visit [www.pridehouston.org](http://www.pridehouston.org).

4:00 p.m., Guava Lamp, 570 Waugh



# The Pride Houston Festival



The 2005 Pride Festival blew away all expectations for attendance. As a result, this year's festival will be twice as large and will include even more food, more activities, more places to relax with friends and more entertainment than ever before.



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# Houston Pride Festival

There's only one place to be on the afternoon of Pride Day—the 2006 Houston Pride Festival! Come on out Saturday, June 26, from 2 p.m. - 8 p.m. and celebrate the GLBT community as Pride Houston throws a fun-filled street carnival in the heart of Montrose.

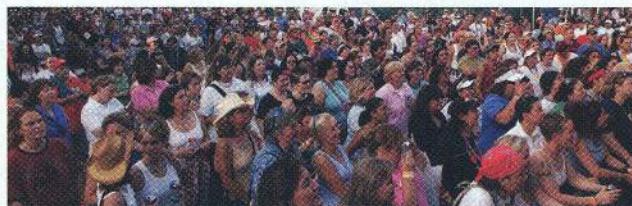


The 2006 Pride Festival will offer the Houston community the opportunity to see top entertainers from all over the country, as well as hot artists from our own backyard. Pride Houston is excited to announce that this year's headliner will be the legendary Grammy-nominated diva, Taylor Dayne. Also featured at this year's event will be the critically acclaimed songwriter Casey Stratton, urban folk and jazz artist KJ Denhert, and rock-n-roller Dylan Rice. And don't miss the stage devoted completely to the best in local GLBT performers. Check out [www.pridehouston.org](http://www.pridehouston.org) for complete information about this year's lineup, including artist bios, sample music and scheduled show times.



The festival is more than a party, though. It's also a place to learn about our history and discover those organizations that are working to make our community better. This year's festival will include an exhibit of artifacts from the history of the GLBT rights movement, as well as pavilions showcasing local businesses and nonprofits that support our community. Stop by to learn, shop and get involved.

There's a lot to look forward to at this year's Pride Festival, so be sure to get your tickets now. Go online to [www.pridehouston.org](http://www.pridehouston.org) for complete event and ticketing details, as well as information about how you can be a part of this year's Festival.



# PRIDE 2006

Saturday June 3rd  
**GUY CANDY**  
with DJ Elliot DeHoyos

Saturday June 17  
**PARTY LIKE A PORNSTAR**  
Only we'll have a real pro from **COLT**  
there to take it off for you!

Saturday June 10  
**PARTY LIKE A SPORTSTAR**  
with DJ Michael Tank. Wear your favorite player's jersey  
and get in Free!

Friday June 23rd  
**CLUB PAPI PRIDE**  
The biggest latin Pride event of the Year!

Saturday June 24th  
**OFFICIAL POST-PRIDE PARADE STAR PARTY**

Join Debbie Holiday and Circuit DJ Scotty K at the biggest nightclub in Houston for the main event,  
then stay on as DJ Michael Tank spins for afterhours!

# RICH'S

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HOUSTON  
2006

TCB  
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Tickets available online and at local stores, please check [richshouston.com](http://richshouston.com) for details.  
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**spoiled boyz**

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OFFICIAL PRIDE AFTERHOURS

**starring** **DJ ANGELO KORTEZ**

**SATURDAY, JUNE 24**  
**Pride Houston Weekend**

Advance Tickets On Sale at M2M Fashion  
[www.spoiledboyz.net](http://www.spoiledboyz.net)

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# Houston's 2006 Grand Marshals

The Male, Female, Honorary and Honorary - Organization Grand Marshals will preside over the nighttime Houston Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Pride Parade on Saturday, June 24, 2006. They were each selected over several other nominees by a vote among the entire community.



Honorary Grand Marshal Organization: Bunnies on the Bayou



Female Grand Marshal: Phyllis Randolph Frye,  
Honorary Grand Marshal: Rev. Marilyn Meeker-Williams,  
Male Grand Marshal: Ray Ramirez,  
Grand Marshal Organization: Bunnies on the Bayou.



**PRIDE**  
HOUSTON  
**2006**

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Visit [www.pridehouston.org](http://www.pridehouston.org) to view & order Pride 2006 Official Merchandise

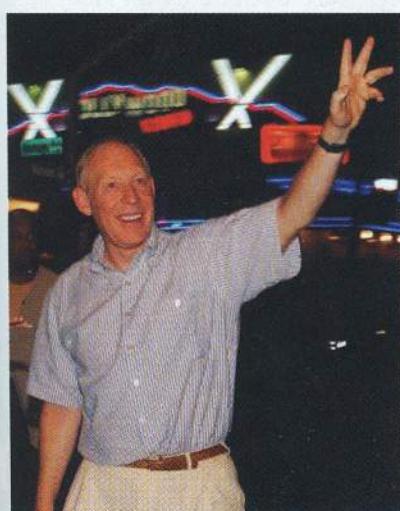
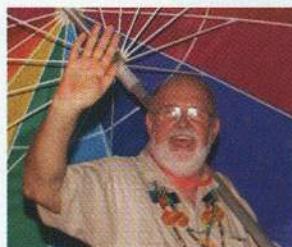


[pridehouston.org](http://pridehouston.org)

# Houston Pride Parade 2005: "Equal Rights, No More No Less!" Highlights

Images by Yvonne Feree





# The “Best of the Best” from the Houston Pride Parade

The 2005 Houston Pride Parade Award Winners



Judges' Choice  
Bunnies on the Bayou  
Continental Airlines  
Houston Gay & Lesbian Film Festival



Stonewall (best social commentary):  
MCC/H.A.T.C.H.



Aria (best creative sound): Montrose Diner



Fabulous (best costumes): Inergy Club

Rainbow (best lighting): Charles Armstrong Investments



Ruby Slipper (best walking): PFLAG Houston

Judy Garland (best performance): The Strangerettes of the Turtle Creek Chorale



Priscilla (best float by a non-profit group): Community Gospel Church



Spirit of Montrose (best overall): The Strangerettes of the Turtle Creek Chorale



Winners were announced at an awards ceremony held at Guava Lamp on Sunday, June 26, 2005. Winners were decided by an independent panel of judges that included Larry Bagneris, one of the founders of the Houston Pride Parade and Executive Director of the City of New Orleans Human Relations Commission; transgender activist Vanessa Edwards Foster; Jason Middleton of the *Houston Chronicle*; Robert Moore, owner of the *Dallas Voice* and *TXN Newsmagazine*; and attorney and immigration equality activist John Nechman.

# The Houston Pride Parade

Equal Rights! No More! No Less! by Jason Ayala, Parade Chair

First off you are probably wondering, "Where's Lynn?" Well, for the past year and a half she had a little shadow tailing her and she decided that she would hand down the tiara. And as Miss Pride Parade 2006 I promise to uphold the quality of future parades and help to make celebrating our community full of Pride. (Imagine me with a tiara, bouquet of roses and tears in my eyes waving to everyone.)



But seriously, last June we had a little party and invited everyone. Not only did 200,000 of our closest GLBT and straight friends show up, but we were televised around the country. With the help of Q Television, we were one of the Pride celebrations covered by the queer network in its entirety. One of the highlights and 2005 Judy Garland (best performance) and Spirit of Montrose (best overall) awards winner, The Strangerettes, were high-stepping and high-kicking down the parade route.



And you know that a parade just is not a parade until you have a big-haired drill squad marching through, especially in Texas.

Also helping us celebrate were Here! Network and Chad Allen, and we even had local CBS affiliate news reporter Lisa Foronda waving to the crowd, along with almost 130 other entries. A great time was had by all while we supported the theme that civil rights are for everyone, "Equal Rights: No More! No Less!"



What's in store for 2006? Well, I can guarantee you that we will celebrate at the same bat-time and same bat-channel: Saturday night, June 24, 2006, on Westheimer starting at Woodhead rolling out on time at 8:45 p.m. Prior to that, come on out early for the 2006 Houston Pride Festival, which is great fun for everyone. We can only get bigger and better. Happy Pride!

## There's No Place Like Home: The number of GLBT seniors living in the United States is increasing at a faster rate than ever before. Where will we live? By Nancy Ford

Once upon a time, a very, very long time ago, long before Melissa and Tammy and Elton and David and Rosie and Kelli freely roamed the planet, there lived a group of very, very special people. These people were gay—and lesbian and transgender and bisexual—but they didn't quite know what word to use to identify one another; they just knew they were different. They had no churches, no schools, no film festivals and certainly no Pride parades—not even a local weekly newspaper to call their own.

They had little formal way of recognizing each other; still, they managed to form community. They gathered in florist shops and convents and theatrical costume departments, quietly and carefully eking out a living despite being forced to live their lives on the fringe of society.

Yet, despite being the target of much cruelty, disease and inequity, because of their strength and courage, these primitive yet fabulous people persevered. Today they make up the cornerstone of the GLBT community, and many of them are still going strong.

They are our GLBT seniors, and, face it, there are more of them... well, more of us... than ever before. The last U.S. census, taken in 2004, indicated that there are 36.3 million people age 65 and over in the United States, accounting for 12 percent of the total population. As many as 4.9 million of them are 85 or older.

Of course, it's impossible to pinpoint the exact number of gay and lesbian seniors until the census bureau starts including a GLBT box for respondents to anonymously check. Expect that to happen shortly after George W. Bush hosts the White Party at the White House.

But the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force estimates—albeit very roughly—that there are more than 3 million GLBT Americans over 65, a figure they say will increase by a million in the next 25 years. No wonder smart marketing firms target the gay population as a prime demographic to pitch their wares to.

The Task Force further reports in *Out In Age: Public Policy Issues Affecting GLBT Elders* by Sean Cahill, Ken South and Jane Spade, that GLBT elders, especially

gay men, may have fewer adult children who can provide caregiving. Certainly, in the 21st century, as the definition of family expands, the propensity for GLBT people to have children is increasing.

Compounding the challenge for adequate GLBT elder care is the fact that the massive number of gay men who died from AIDS decimated the number of caregivers who might otherwise be available to provide caregiving to others.

As a result, thousands of those GLBT people without children or supportive families and without a substantial savings account to rely upon may soon need a place to live and be cared for. A 1999 survey conducted at a gay and lesbian health fair in New York City by Pride Senior Network indicated that only 64

percent of respondents under 50 years of age said they had someone to rely upon if they needed a caregiver immediately.

**Old age has its pleasures, which, though different, are not less than the pleasures of youth.**

—W. Somerset Maugham

One would think that as the market becomes more and more saturated with GLBT seniors who will soon be looking for "family-friendly" retirement and care facilities to spend their golden years in, there would be a plethora of queer senior communities to choose from. But while many communities are currently "under development"—including potential facilities in Dallas and Houston—the pickin's are mighty slim. A Google search revealed only one fully operational, fully equipped and accredited GLBT senior retirement community available in the United States.

The appropriately named RainbowVision is a 146-unit complex on the outskirts of Santa Fe, New Mexico, that opened in late 2005. It differs from most other gay and lesbian retirement communities that are largely operated by its residents as a sort of commune: it was built with \$35 million of investors' money, according to the *Chicago Tribune*.

RainbowVision offers independent-living units and assisted-living units as well as state-of-the-art medical care for the extremely aged and infirm. But it's not all about monitors and medication. And don't forget the drag shows and Pride parades. Their RainbowVision Resident Club Cabaret invites residents to "meet friends later at the Club's rooftop Starlight Lounge" for its periodic drag shows. And they even have an annual Pride parade. For more information log onto [www.rainbowvisionprop.com](http://www.rainbowvisionprop.com).

More of a real estate development than an elder careful facility, the Resort on Carefree Boulevard in southwest Florida calls itself "an affordable vacation and retirement community."

According to its website, The Resort "encompasses fifty tropical acres and features 278 homes and RV lots with many overlooking tropical freshwater lakes and preserves. All sites are especially designed to accommodate manufactured homes or recreational vehicles in a natural setting." And there's a reason why facilities of this nature are no longer called "rest homes." The Resort offers its owners a swimming pool, tennis courts, well-maintained grounds, lakes, kayaking, backpacking and fishing, and caravans to theatre, symphony and opera events. More sedentary activities, like poker, bridge and dominoes tournaments are played at the property's 10,000 square foot clubhouse.

Fully developed home sites at the Resort start at only \$30,000. Homes and home site packages are available from \$79,000-\$140,000. For more information, call 941-731-3208 or log onto [www.resortoncb.com](http://www.resortoncb.com). So it appears that the bad news is that currently, despite their real or perceived affluence, more GLBT people than ever before are facing their futures without having a secure, safe, healthy and supportive place to spend them. The good news is, increased visibility of this thriving segment of our population is bound to attract an increasing number of forward-thinking investors intent on reaping the gold from our golden years. If they build them, we will come. It's only a matter of time.

Nancy Ford, a Houston-based writer and comedian who recently entered her 50s, is not at all insecure that she was asked to write this *Pride.06* story about aging. Reach her at [TheDykeShowTX@aol.com](mailto:TheDykeShowTX@aol.com).

For more information on aging and the GLBT community, log on to [www.sageUSA.org](http://www.sageUSA.org) or [www.gaylesbianretiring.org](http://www.gaylesbianretiring.org).

### Seniors by the Numbers

880,000	The number of people added each month to the world's population of people 65 and over.
36.3 million	The number of people 65 and over in the United States (as of July 1, 2004). This age group accounts for 12 percent of the total population.
4.9 million	The number of people 85 and over in the United States (as of July 2004).
86.7 million	Projected population of people 65 and over in the year 2050.
10.2%	Poverty rate for people 65 and over in 2003

—from *Senior Journal*, April 25, 2005

### AIDS and Elders

11 to 14 percent of new HIV infection are being detected in people age 55 or older.

**Age does not protect you from love. But love, to some extent, protects you from age.**

—Jeanne Moreau

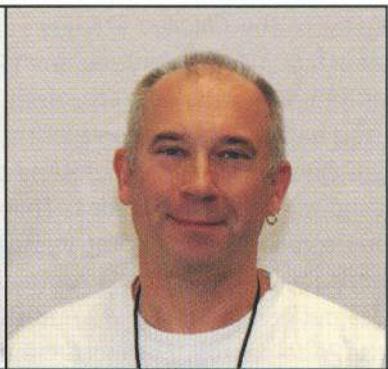
# Meet the 2006 Pride Houston Officers & Board



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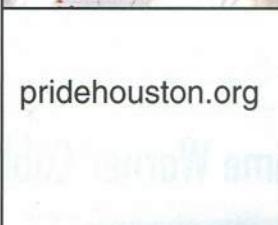
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By Michael Baker

The year was 1985, and Houston voters faced a ballot referendum to deny gay city employees protection from job discrimination. It passed.

Go forward 16 years. Houston voters are faced with another ballot referendum, this one seeking to block the city from offering domestic partner benefits to its employees. It also passed.

Two seemingly identical victories for the anti-gay crowd. Sounds like not much has changed? Look again. Opponents of the 1985 referendum were trounced, outvoted four-to-one. The 2001 referendum eked out its victory by only a few percentage points. Local businesses that came out overwhelmingly for the 1985 referendum stood with the supporters of gay rights on the 2001 one; many of them already offered such benefits to their employees.

"We almost won it," said Jack Valinski, vice president of the Houston GLBT Political Caucus. "There was a major shift in the way people think."

That same year, the Houston City Council managed to pass an ordinance that accomplished the anti-discrimination goals of the 1985 referendum despite the protests of a few conservative council members. The vote was 10 to 4, and this was done under the watch of Mayor Lee Brown, the first sitting mayor to ride in the city's Gay Pride Parade, and Councilwoman Annise Parker, the city's first openly lesbian councilmember.

Go forward a few more years. Parker's now the city controller, and Brown's successor is Mayor Bill White, another political leader who never shies away from meeting with GLBT groups. Yet another openly gay candidate, Sue Lovell, stands a good chance of securing her own spot on City Council.

Despite Houston's reputation as a conservative city of oilmen, the GLBT community has managed to secure itself a strong position in the city's politics. Some of that credit, no doubt, must go to the Houston GLBT Political Caucus. Founded in 1975, the Caucus touts itself as the oldest GLBT civil rights organization in the South. Since then, its primary goal has been letting the community know which candidates support them in local elections, said Maria Gonzalez, the organization's 2005 president.

"That's our fundamental priority that has not changed and will not change," Gonzalez said. "We get out, screen the candidates and endorse them."

The organization is a non-partisan group that has endorsed Democrats, Republicans and third-party candidates. But these candidates must ask for the endorsement. In order to get the thumbs-up from the Caucus, they first must sit down and prove to the members that they will be supportive of GLBT causes.

Conservatives generally still aren't interested in an endorsement, and some candidates—including some of those who have sought the endorsement themselves—often try to score political points with religious conservatives by painting their opponents' association with a gay-friendly group as a negative, Valinski said.

Others woo the Caucus for the endorsement, however. Even White, who faced no major opponents in his latest election, chose the Caucus as one of only two major endorsements he courted, Gonzalez said.

"Clearly, he was going to do well, but he said it was important to sit down and talk to certain communities that it's important for him to stay connected with," she said. "We're not a pariah organization."

Before the electronic age, people drove into Montrose from the suburbs to pick up the Caucus endorsement cards, Valinski said. Now they're available on the Caucus website. But their purpose remains the same: a one-stop source to inform GLBT voters.

It's especially important in the judicial elections, where slates of little-known candidates often stretch for pages on Texas ballots, Valinski said.

"A lot of people, they just guess," he said. "We don't have very many (Caucus-endorsed) judges in office, and nobody statewide that we've endorsed. Hopefully, that will change."

The Caucus has other duties, too. Endorsements, after all, mean little if there is no one out voting for the candidates.

The state's constitutional amendment seeking to ban gay marriage, for example, was a reason for mobilization for the Caucus, Gonzalez said. The group knew it was an uphill battle, but it still organized block walks to try to get out voters from its base.

To make that easier, the group also is constantly updating and maintaining a voter database of about 35,000 people, she said.

That's why the Caucus is always looking for new volunteers. It needs people willing to knock on doors on Saturday mornings, making sure that progressive voters show up at the polls. It needs people to sit down at the computer and keep that database up to date, making sure it can keep those progressive voters informed of upcoming elections.

The next time a gay issue comes up on the Houston ballot box, the majority of voters might be ready to vote on the side of equality.

The easiest way to get involved is to show up at caucus meetings on the first Wednesday of each month, Gonzalez said. Visitors can hang out, get to know the group and use their interests to find their niche, she said. For those who don't have the time to do that, there's an even easier way to get involved, Valinski said.

"Register to vote," he said. "Get your friends registered to vote. And be educated on the issues."

For information on volunteering with the Houston GLBT Political Caucus, visit [www.hglbtpc.org](http://www.hglbtpc.org) on the web or call 713-521-1000.

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