

Out▼Smart

JUNE 2007

Starry Starry Pride

Cyndi Lauper

Cyndi Lauper, Rosie O'Donnell, Margaret Cho, Debbie Harry, Erasure, and others swing into Houston for the True Colors tour



**PRIDE GUIDE
INSIDE**

ALSO INSIDE:

- ***Desert Hearts***, the landmark lesbian flick, 20 years later
- Parade grand marshals
- Our GLBT history

Houston's GLBT magazine
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OUT IN FRONT

These elected grand marshals will lead the GLBT Pride Parade down Westheimer this year

The community voted, and there are new marshals in town for the GLBT Pride Parade. Look for them at the beginning of the annual procession on Saturday, June 23, as it rolls along Westheimer from Woodhead to Taft. We photographed the marshals (except for Garnet Coleman, who at press time was still working in Austin during the final days of the legislative session) at points along the traditional parade route.

*By Marene Gustin
Photographs by Dalton DeHart*

Jack Valinski Male Grand Marshal

- Director of operations of the Houston Equal Rights Alliance (HERA).
- Toasted for his years of activism in the local community by HERA at a March 29 fundraiser.
- Long-time leader of the Pride Committee of Houston (renamed Pride Houston in 2005), most recently as executive director before he left the organization last year.
- Houston GLBT Political Caucus board member.
- Producer and co-host of *Queer Voices*, the weekly KPFT radio program.

What is your proudest accomplishment?

I think the night parade. We made the switch in 1997. It was the first nighttime Pride Parade, and it's still the largest in the Southwest. Through that, I think we've been able to help Houston become more accepting, not just of GLBTs but of all people.

How long does it take to put on the parade?

When we started it was a March to July effort, now it's year-round planning.

You're originally from Pennsylvania, but you've been here since 1981. What do you like best about the city?

Yeah, I'm a Yankee! But believe it or not, I like the weather! I really like the weather here. It never snows.

Are you an outdoors guy, then?

I love riding my bike outside. I also like watching indie films, and I'm a news junkie.

And the future?

Is all about getting voters, progressive voters, together. I've started a database. We have about 30,000 Harris County voters now, because I feel we need to work on our home base. Presidential elections are fun, but the real change comes locally. We want to get Annise [Parker, city controller] elected mayor in 2009 and get some Democratic county judges. →

Jack Valinski, photographed at Westheimer and Windsor, at the beginning of the famous "curve."

Maria González

Female Grand Marshal



Maria González, photographed at Lanier Middle School, part of the parade staging area every June.

- Associate professor of English at the University of Houston.
- A leading authority on Mexican-American literature, Chicana writers, feminist and queer theory, sexuality, and pedagogy.
- Author of *Contemporary Mexican American Women Novelists: Toward a Feminist Identity*.
- Board member and driving force of the Houston GLBT Political Caucus (and immediate past president).

How does an English prof get involved in politics?

I consider myself a scholar-activist. I've always been political. I'm familiar with those issues because of my specialties in academia. When I came to Houston in 1991, I got involved in politics and met people like [political consultant] Grant Martin and Annise Parker, and it just went from there.

Who's your favorite writer?

Oh, there isn't just one. I've got lots of favorite writers: Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa and many, many more.

What is the state of Chicana lesbian writing today?

There are more and more writers every year. The expected homophobia actually propelled those writers to challenge the literary field. You now have different types of authors.

You have gay writers in every single genre in publishing.

How do you prepare for the parade?

I was assured that much of my work would be ceremonial, so I don't think I have too much to do. I'm very busy right now with the endorsements for the upcoming city election. It is so important that we have people representing us who are in tune with our needs.

What does it mean to you to be a marshal?

I was thrilled just to be nominated. I was a little taken aback when I found out I won. It's very illustrious company, and to be there with Jack, it's very special. Stonewall was about getting them off our backs to stop harassing us. That's why we celebrate in June, but Pride represents a lot of different factors and how far we have come. This is one of those things when I get old and sit in my rocker and tell my story, I'll be very proud of.

→



Garnet Coleman Honorary Grand Marshal

Garnet Coleman, photographed by Christopher Bown, addressed the crowd at the March 5 Equality Texas-sponsored Lobby Day rally in Austin.

- Has served as a state representative from Texas District 147 since 1991.
- A third-generation resident of Third Ward.
- Named legislator of the year by the Texas Alliance for the Mentally Ill in 1995 and one of the 10 best legislators by *Texas Monthly* in 1995 and 1997.
- Advocate for the GLBT community, low-income housing, and solar energy.
- Among his accomplishments during the current legislative session, introduced bills that would protect GLBT students and that would add transgender Texans to the James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Act.

Is the GLBT community becoming stronger on the political front?

I think so. The Houston GLBT Political Caucus helped me win my primary last year in which one of my opponents was using a lot of homophobic rhetoric, and it's clear the GLBT community was decisive in helping elect representative Ellen Cohen as well. That's a testament to both how strong the community is and how much progress the community has made in the past few years.

What is your proudest piece of legislation?

For GLBT Texans, I'm certainly proud of the Dignity for All Students Act [HB 2527], which prohibits discrimination and bullying against GLBT students in our public schools. Every student deserves a quality education free from discrimination and harassment, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and I'm proud to have authored

this bill this session. [At press time, the bill had been referred to the house committee on public education.]

What do you think the parade does for Houston's profile?

The parade is an amazing opportunity for Houstonians from all over the city to celebrate how proud we are of Houston's GLBT community. But more than being just a party, it's a chance to remember Stonewall, to remember where the movement for GLBT rights started and how far it's come since then. The more we can celebrate that, the better Houston's profile is as a place where the GLBT community can live, work, and play.

What are you most looking forward to in the parade?

Riding in the parade, celebrating how proud Houston is of its GLBT community, and hitting up JR's at the end of the evening. →

Imperial Court of Houston-Space City Empire Grand Marshal-Organization



Imperial Court of Houston members (l-r) Sean Carter, Regina Dane, Orlin Cullever, Ginger Vitis, and Marc Cohen, photographed outside Mary's...Naturally.

- ICOH, to use the shorthand name, is one of two local nobility-inspired systems in Houston, which raise funds for community causes through drag shows and other benefit events (the other is the Empire of the Royal Sovereign and Imperial Court of the Single Star).
- In 2007 ICOH celebrates its fifth anniversary, a year that the nonprofit group has dubbed The Reign of Fundamentally Fabulous Fundraising.

What does it mean to be in the city with the largest Pride Parade in the Southwest? Apollo Emperor Orlin Cullever:

It can be overwhelming—but at the same time it is such an exciting experience! And to be elected by the community to be the Organizational Grand Marshal of the largest parade in the Southwest and the fourth-largest city in the country is such an extreme honor. And to receive this honor during our fifth anniversary year is the icing on the cake. After working so hard as the new kid on the block in the charity fundraising community, this is our confirmation from the community.

What's the organization's proudest accomplishment this year?

Chairman of the Board Marc Cohen: We have achieved so much, especially this past year, that makes that a tough question to answer. I would have to say that there was one accomplishment in particular which proves how hard we have worked as

an organization. Each November we hold our Cotillion Ball where we present the total funds from the previous reign. This past November we were able to announce a total of over \$90,000 to Houston charities, which brought our four-year total to over \$300,000.

So you put the "fun" in fundraising? Gemini Empress Ginger Vitis:

Well, of course, we did! I think we all put our own fun into fundraising. We all have a different opinion of what makes it fun, and anyone who attends any of our functions can tell you that "boring" is not a word that is in our dictionary. Whether it be drag shows, bake sales, car washes, garage sales, or our fabulous sit-down dinner and ball in October, we manage to turn it into a very exciting and pleasing event for everyone.

Marene Gustin profiled Robin Reagler, Writers in the Schools executive director, for our May issue.

A photograph of a person's arm raised, holding a small rainbow flag on a stick. The person is wearing a rainbow wristband. The background is a blurred crowd at a Pride event, with large rainbow flags visible.

SO PROUD

Get ready: The annual Pride month whirlwind starts now

Compiled by Tim Brookover

This is the month to revel in our collective pride as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people and our allies. So here we celebrate with a selected listing of events and activities, including, of course, the 2007 GLBT Pride Parade, still proudly rolling along its traditional route: Westheimer. →

LONE STAR PRIDE 2007 HOUSTON JUNE 23rd



HOUSTON CHRONICLE
Supporting our Community



**MONTROSE
MINING COMPANY**

- 6/2: Miami's South Beach Monthly Trip Giveaway
- 6/9: South Beach's 6th Year Anniversary Party
- 6/16: Free Paris Party with Giveaways
- 6/20: South Beach presents the return of Club Papi
- 6/23: Adult video stars Zeb Atlas and Mark Dalton
- 6/30: Red, White & Blue Party - Alyson Calagna

June 10

6:30 pm

Kick-Off Party
with Alan Lett,
Josh Duffy and
Miss Kofi
Museum of
Natural Science
Admission: \$10

June 16

10:00 am - 3:00 pm
Community Law Day
Sponsored by
Stonewall Law
Association of Greater
Houston
Bearing Memorial
United Methodist
Church
1440 Harold Street

5:00 pm

Wine Tasting
Event
Houston Club
Friends of Pride
members only

June 17

5:00 pm

Party on the Patio
Tony's Corner Pocket
Admission: \$10

7:00 pm

Pride Idol
Semifinals
Guava Lamp

June 23

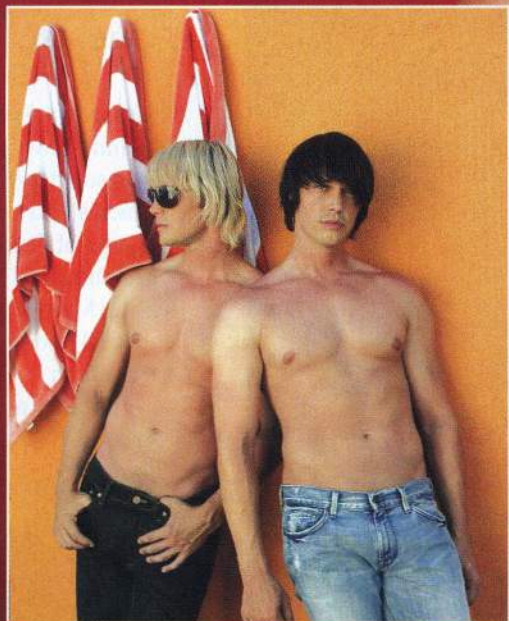
2:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Pride Festival with Nemesis
Westheimer & Commonwealth
Admission: \$10

8:45 pm

Pride Parade
On Westheimer Road

Gay twins Jacob and Joshua (inset), stars of Logo's TV reality show *Nemesis Rising*, headline Houston's 2007 GLBT Pride Festival. *American Idol* finalist Kimberly Caldwell emcees the festival stage to anoint the winner of Pride Idol contest.



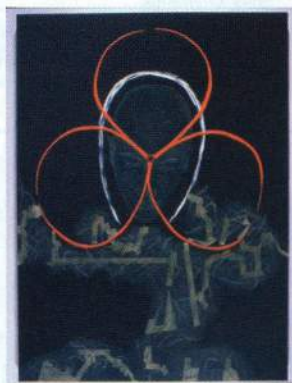
REMEMBER ANITA

That could be the rallying cry for the local GLBT community, which in many ways first bonded to protest the 1977 appearance in Houston by singer Anita Bryant, at the time a notoriously antigay crusader. Throughout June, Houston Public Library commemorates the 30th anniversary of the June 16 protest by gays and their allies with an exhibition, **Anita Bryant Comes to Houston**, June 1977, at the downtown Julia Ideson Building. The presentation includes photographs, posters, newspaper clippings, and other documents related to the landmark community event. On the 25th anniversary of the Bryant appearance (before the Texas Bar Association!) and protest, we published an oral history, "Houston's Stonewall: The Night Anita Bryant Came To Town" (June 2002 *OutSmart*). Read it at www.outsmartmagazine.com. Details: 832/393-1300, www.houstonlibrary.org.

HEALTHY LIVING

Lesbian Health Initiative presents its annual **Rainbow Health Fair** on Saturday, June 2, 8:15 a.m.–3:15 p.m., at Legacy Community Health Services. Services offered include mammograms and blood

pressure and cholesterol checks. Legal eagles will provide information on medical power of attorney and advance directive (living will). Details: 713/426-3356, www.lhihouston.org.



PAINTER PAINTINGS

This month, Gallery M2 in the Heights presents **Interruptions**, an exhibition of photographs and paintings created by John Painter and

his late partner, Tracy Silverberg, who was lost to AIDS last year. The show will be displayed June 6–30. A portion of sales proceeds benefits Legacy Community Health Services. Painter will be on hand at the Saturday, June 9, 7–10 p.m., opening reception. Details: 713/861-6070, www.m2-houston.com.

DANCE!

Did you attend your senior prom with the head cheerleader, but really wanted to ask the captain of the football team? Or vice versa? Well, now you can partner with the gender of your choice at the **HATCH Alternative Prom** on Friday, June 8. The wonderful support group for GLBT and questioning youth hosts the yearly program for the young folk, but grown-ups are invited, too. The venue for the 7 p.m.–midnight event is the Historic Magnolia Ballroom downtown. There is no admission charge for young people ages 13–20. The rest of us pay \$25. Details: 713/529-3590, www.hatchyouth.org.

OUT ON THE STREETS

Lace up your athletic shoes for the **Houston Pride 5K Fun Run and Walk** on Saturday, June 9, 7:30 a.m. The Houston Montrose Athletic Association organizes this annual event with the Texas FrontRunners. Proceeds from the run and walk support AssistHers, the group that provides support for lesbians living with illnesses and disabilities. Registration: \$25 after June 2. Details: www.geocities.com/houstonpride5k.

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READERS ARE LEADERS

Brush up on your leadership skills this Pride season. Josephine Tittsworth, the transgender activist and educator, has announced an eight-week **Summer Leadership Reading Circle** based on the book *Leading at the Edge: Leadership Lessons from the Extraordinary Saga of Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition*, by Dennis N. T. Perkins (2000). The dates for the 7 p.m. sessions, hosted by the Houston GLBT Community Center, are June 5, 11, 19, 25 and July 11, 17, 23. At the end of the eight weeks, each participant should grasp the 10 components, presented by Perkins, needed to become an effective leader, according to Tittsworth. To sign up, e-mail Tittsworth at Social_worker@juno.com with "Leadership" on the subject line of the e-mail. Details: 713/524-3818, www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org.

SAY A LITTLE PRAYER

Yes, Virginia, there are churches and temples that embrace gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. On Sunday, June 10, a consortium of GLBT-positive congregations demonstrates that welcome with its annual **GLBT Pride Interfaith Worship Service** at Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. Clergy and lay people from numerous area faith traditions will participate in the 7 p.m. service. In what will surprise many GLBT folk, the speaker is a Baptist—yes!—but a preacher from the non-bigoted branch of that Protestant brand: Rev. Kenneth Pennings, executive director of the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists. Details: Burton Bagby, cbbagby@sbcglobal.net.

START IT UP

The official Pride season gets in gear with the **2007 Pride Houston Kick-Off Party** on Sunday, June 10, at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. Popular diva Kofi is the emcee, Special K from KRBE handles DJ duties for dancing among the dinosaurs. Local singers Alan Lett and Josh Duffy perform during the 6:30–8:30 p.m. bash. Tickets: \$10. Details: 713/529-6979, www.pridehouston.org.

MARSHALL THE FORCES

Congratulate the 2007 GLBT Pride Parade grand marshals at a reception hosted by the **Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce** on Monday, June 11, 8 p.m., at 1415 Bar & Grille. Read about the grand marshals on page 51. Details: www.thechamberhouston.org.

DEBBIE HARRY:

CALL HER ON THE QUEER LINE This lead singer for Blondie burst into our collective consciousness in the mid-'70s, and hasn't been far from center stage ever since. The group was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2006, likely propelled there following decades of support from Harry's loyal gay fans.

Harry's "community" credits? John Waters called her for a role in his original treatment of *Hairspray* (1988). She then penned the soundtrack for Waters' *Polyester* (1981). What could be gayer?

A LITTLE BUSINESS

Participating in the Parade? Pride Houston requires that at least one person with each entry attend the **Mandatory Pride Parade Meeting** on Tuesday, June 12, 7 p.m. (location not announced at press time). Details: 713/529-6979, www.pridehouston.org.

FAMILY DINNER

On the second Tuesday of every month, the **Houston GLBT Community Center** hosts an informal nosh at Hollywood Vietnamese, Chinese & French restaurant. For Pride month, the center salutes two other community groups, the Houston Transgender Unity Committee and Gulf Coast Archive and Museum of GLBT History, at the Tuesday, June 12 GLBT Night @ Hollywood. Dinner begins at 6:30 p.m., and guests order from the menu. The center

will give away special Pride-themed door prizes (provided by *OutSmart*). Details: 713/524-3818, www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org.

CLUBBY

Friends of Pride, the donors group for Pride Houston, takes its annual **Wine Tasting Event** to the very posh downtown Houston Club this year. On Saturday, June 16, guests can sample more than 20 wines from around the world and nosh on appetizers while a jazz combo plays in the background. Not a wine drinker? Pride Houston has added a premium vodka station. There is no admission charge with Friends of Pride membership (which starts at \$75). Details: 713/529-6979, www.pridehouston.org.

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ALL-AMERICAN CHO: ASIAN. AUTHOR. ALTRUIST. ANARCHIST. And damn funny woman. Margaret Cho is all these things, and more. Who better could emcee HRC's star-studded True Colors tour than our favorite balls-to-the-wall comedian?

Thank goodness her short-lived ABC television series, *All American Girl* (1984), was cancelled after one short season. The cancellation freed her to become one of our country's most outspoken and thought-provoking artists, despite (or perhaps because of?) her unflagging support of GLBT equality.

SO PROUD continued from page 64

COME ON, GET HAPPY

The Stonewall rebellion of 1969 was fueled in part by despair over the then-recent death of Judy Garland, whose life and career meant so much to the queer tribe. On June 16, **Gay Men's Chorus of Houston** weaves together those historical and musical strands with *There's No Place Like Home*, a 7:30 p.m. concert in Jones Hall. Don't fret, though: The history lessons won't hurt a bit, and there are the Garland classics—"The Trolley Song," "The Boy Next Door," and, of course, "Over the Rainbow." Tickets: \$19-\$39. Details: www.bayoucityperformingarts.org.

JOCKED UP

Team Houston, the organization supporting many local sports groups, hosts a **Team Houston Mixer**, a swim party and cookout on Sunday, June 17, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., at member Keith Peters' Creative Development gymnastics facility. Details: gaygamesteamhouston.org.

FORMAL FIESTA

Savvy socialites in the community know that **Noche de Gala**, the Gay and Lesbian Latin Organization-hosted dance, has become one of the glamour events of Pride month. The second annual black-tie party is Friday, June 22, 9:30 p.m.-2 a.m. at the Arabia Shiners Center. The Grammy-nominated band Avizo performs, and DJ Alex Cherry spins additional tunes. Tickets: \$50. Details: 713/710-0045, www.houstongallo.org.

STICK IT

Bering Omega Community Services and AIDS Foundation Houston Camp Hope benefit this year from the **Houston Billiard Open**. Independent Billiard League of Houston hosts the tournament at Slick Willie's Family Pool Hall on Saturday and Sunday, June 23-24, starting at 10 a.m. Registration: 10 a.m. Tickets: \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door. Details: www.iblhouston.com.

GET CARDED

Quick, where is your voter registration card? Are you even registered to vote? On Pride Parade day, June 23, the **Houston Equal Rights Alliance** and the **Houston GLBT Political Caucus** will help the non-registered among us by staging the largest voter-registration drive and voter-identification project in their history. Volunteers from the two allied organizations will be stationed all day in the Pride Festival area and along the parade route. There are project meetings on June 13 and June 20, 6:30 p.m., at the HERA/caucus office. Details: 713/522-HERA, www.houstonera.org, 713/521-1000, www.hglbtpc.org.

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ERASURE: ALPHABETICALLY CORRECT

He needs only the "L" and the "B" to complete the set. Before straight frontman Vince Clarke hooked up with the openly "G" Andy Bell in the mid-'80s to form Erasure, he performed in a far lesser known pop duo called Yazoo with "T," Alison Moyet.

The boys from Britain just released a new CD, *Light at the End of the World*, so expect to hear some new sounds mixed in with their tried and true hits on HRC's True Colors tour.

MUSIC, MUSIC, MUSIC

Before the parade, listen to some tunes at the **2007 GLBT Pride Festival**. The headliners this year: the ab-tastic duo Jacob and Joshua Miller, who made a name for themselves with their Logo network reality series, *Jacob and Joshua: Nemesis Rising*. Opening acts are the Louisiana-native rocker Laurel and Kimberly Caldwell, a finalist from the second season of *American Idol*. Speaking of that darn TV series, if your favorite (ahem, Melinda Doolittle) didn't win this season, you can make your vote count in another tuneful contest. The finals of the Pride Idol competition take place at 5 p.m. Pride Houston hosts the semi-final round on June 17 at Guava Lamp. The festival, which includes a community-groups tent, cosponsored by Pride Houston and Bunnies on the Bayou, begins at 2 p.m. at the Westheimer-Commonwealth intersection. Admission: \$10. Details: 713/529-6979, www.pridehouston.org.

THE MAIN EVENT

Before the parade passes by, find a prime viewing spot along Westheimer for the **2007 GLBT Pride Parade**. The largest Pride parade in the Southwest begins at 8:45 at Woodhead and proceeds east to Whitney. Prime viewing spots: the curve area

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**ROSIE O'DONNELL: TRUMP**

THIS She's rested and ready and released from *The View*. When the shy and retiring (not) Rosie O'D takes the stage on Human Rights Campaign's True Colors tour, it's safe to assume she'll have a thing or two to say about being in W's home state. Formerly dubbed the Queen of Nice by the press based on her ruffle-no-feathers demeanor she exhibited as host of her long-running talk show, *The Rosie O'Donnell Show*, she's currently better described as the Queen of Real.

An outspoken advocate for children's rights, same-sex equality and an end to the Iraq War, O'Donnell married Kelli Carpenter in San Francisco in 2004. The couple has four children.

beginning at Windsor and Yoakum/Waugh intersection. Details: 713/529-6979, www.pridehouston.org.

THE DAY AFTER Cyndi Lauper. Deborah Harry. Erasure. The Dresden Dolls. Rufus Wainwright. Margaret Cho. Rosie O'Donnell. If the **True Colors Tour**, presented in support of the Human Rights Campaign, isn't the queerest entertainment event to blow across the country, then we don't know what is. The extravaganza lands in Houston (one of 16 U.S. stops) on Sunday, June 24, at the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. A portion of every ticket sale benefits the work of HRC, the national GLBT advocacy organization. The magic starts at 6 p.m. Read an interview with Cyndi Lauper on page 46. Tickets: \$26-\$126. Details: www.hrc.org.

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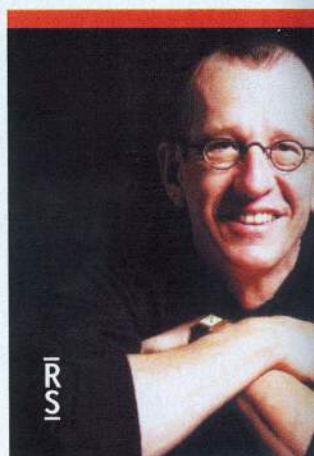
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AMY COOK: WELCOME BACK TO TEXAS

Strange but true, ever since singer-songwriter Amy Cook—who headlines the community stage at the Pride Festival—left L.A. for Marfa, Texas, people have taken notice. Her music has been featured on *Laguna Beach*, *Veronica Mars*, *Dawson's Creek*, and *The L Word*. Her folk-rock style mixes well with her breathy alto confidence a la Sheryl Crow. Her lyrics on her new CD, *The Sky Observer's Guide* (Root House Records), read like those of a poet in search of truth, from the romantic "The Answer" ("Of all the mysteries, all I really wanted to know is what's behind those eyes") to the contemplative "Where Do We Go?" ("Maybe when the wind blows sometime, underneath the depths of sunshine, when the evening's drunk with wine, we'll think of all these summer nights. Where we gonna go from here?"). Want more? Go to www.AmyCook.com. —Eric A.T. Dieckman

ALLISON V. SMITH



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SO PROUD

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REJOICE IN OUR RIGHTS

June 26 marks the fourth anniversary of the landmark *Lawrence vs. Texas* Supreme Court decision that overturned antigay sodomy laws in our state and made us legal across the land. Remember our history: This is a case that started in Houston (read activist Ray Hill's essay "Three Years of Freedom," June 2006 *OutSmart*, and "Supreme Chance," March 2003 *OutSmart*). To mark the historic occasion, the Houston GLBT Community Center hosts its annual **Lawrence vs. Texas Celebration** on Tuesday, June 26, 6:30 p.m., at Bering & James art gallery. One of the petitioners in the case, John Lawrence, is the special guest; his fellow petitioner, Tyron Garner, who died in 2006, will be remembered in a presentation. Donations supporting the center will be welcomed. Details: 713/524-3818, www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org.

GET ACTIVE

Just in time for Pride month, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force releases *Come Out and Win: Organizing Yourself, Your Community, and Your World* (Beacon Press). Written by Sue Hyde, director of the annual Creating Change conference, this handbook on political organizing for the GLBT people will help you get inspired. The Task Force and Beacon Press also release a second book this month, *Out Law: What LGBT Youth Should Know About Their Legal Rights*, written by Lisa Keen and part Queer Action, a new series of paperback originals edited by Michael Bronski. Details: www.thetaskforce.org.

ON THE WEB: Get more Pride month information at www.outsmartmagazine.com. Also check www.pridehouston.org, for additional Pride Houston-sponsored activities.

Do You Know Houston's GLBT History Makers?

Rice University students present project at Pride Festival

By Brian Riedel

Photo by Yvonne Feece

Oscar Wilde once quipped, "Anybody can make history. Only a great man can write it."

Students in Rice University's "Introduction to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Studies" recently tried their hand at both, and you will be able to see their work in the History Tent at the Pride Festival on Saturday, June 23.

As part of the coursework in the Spring 2007 class, the students chose a person to interview from a list of nearly 200 lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender community members who were invited by the instructor to participate in the project. By the end of the semester, the 30 students in the class had researched, interviewed, and prepared presentations featuring the lives and community contributions of 17 Houstonians.

To hear the students talk, the interview experience was both eye opening and fun. →

BLISS

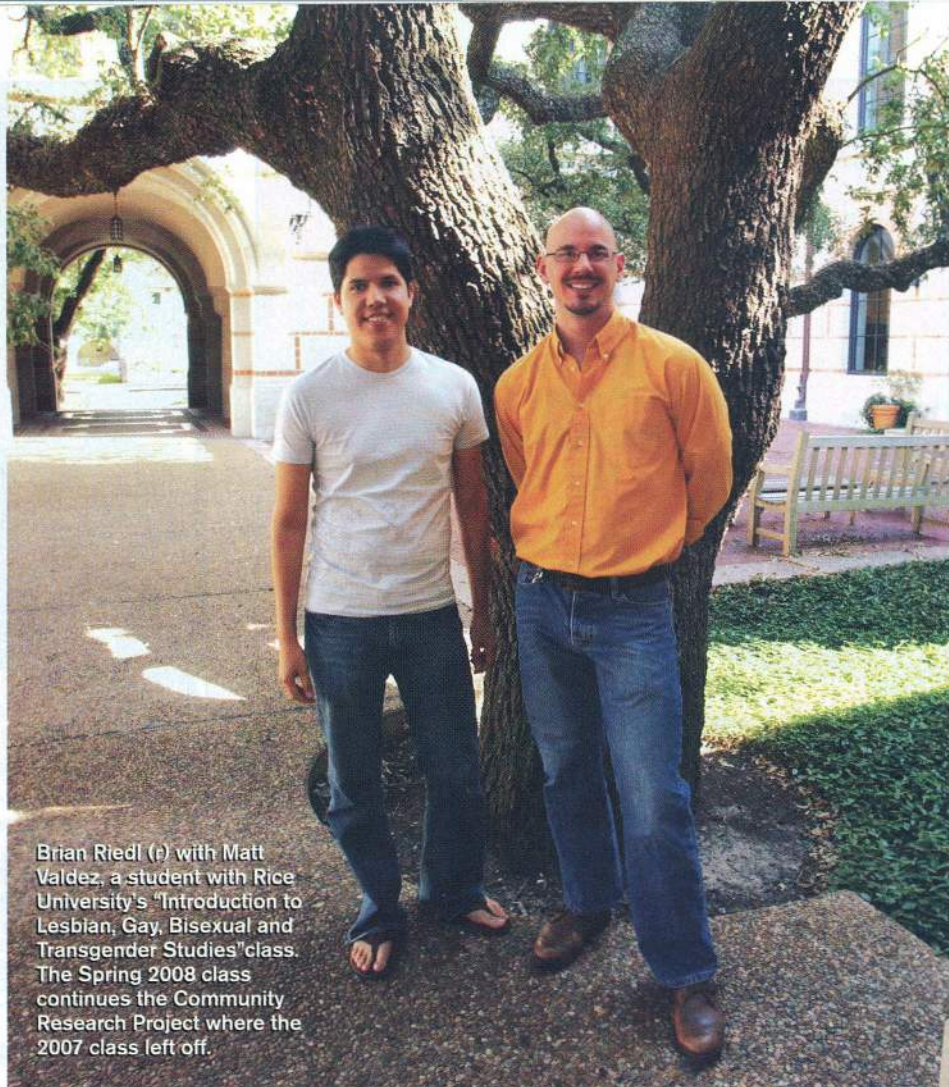
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Brian Riedl (r) with Matt Valdez, a student with Rice University's "Introduction to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Studies" class. The Spring 2008 class continues the Community Research Project where the 2007 class left off.

Houston's GLBT History Makers

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"This past semester has been great, simply due to the fact that it caused me to step out of my comfort zone and explore different avenues," Desarie Walwyn, a junior majoring in psychology, describes it. "I was able to learn a lot about the GLBT community hands on and from a direct source. I know I would not have gotten that opportunity through simply researching books and journal articles."

Jonathan Cary, a senior kinesiology and management double major, and Anisha Turner, a freshman with interests in natural science, describe their experience of the interview project in similar terms.

"The project was never a bore, and we seemed to learn something new every day," he says.

Although the class has been offered to undergraduates for several years through the Center for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality, this year is only the second time that the course has emphasized direct student interviews with prominent members of Houston's GLBT communities. In 2006, the first year where the class


had a community research focus, students worked on such diverse issues as the fight over Proposition 2, Exodus International, the impact of Katrina on HIV services in Houston, how homosexuality is treated in college and professional athletic teams, and factors shaping the ways sexuality is treated in the Episcopal Church.

Rosemary Hennessey, the recently appointed director for the Center for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality, is a strong supporter of building on this new, community-oriented direction.

"One of the goals of the Center for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality," she says, "is to engage the research that students and faculty do at Rice in communities outside academia and the classroom." Hennessey argues that this engaged research "enables students to make connections between ideas and consequences in practice."

Erik Olenchak, who serves on the board of directors for Pride Houston and is one of the many volunteers involved in organizing the History Tent, echoes Hennessey when he describes the impact the project can have, both for students and the community.

"Student involvement equates to one



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of the central purposes of any historical collection insofar as students typically represent a forthcoming generation of knowledge and leadership," Olenchak says.

"Socially," he adds, "their participation represents an opportunity for youthful researchers to interact on a personal level with materials, media, and people emblematic of GLBT history."

So whose stories did the students get to know better, after all? Since it would not be fair to just give it all away, take a look at the hints below to test out your knowledge of some of Houston's history makers!

- a graduate of Rice University and former employee of Mosbacher Energy
- a member of Delta Phi Upsilon
- one of the team of lawyers in the 2003 Supreme Court case, *Lawrence vs. Texas*
- a nurse who served as president of the Lesbian Health Initiative
- a minister and HIV education activist
- a local entrepreneur featured in a Logo documentary
- the owner of the former Galleon, among many other bars and clubs in the Houston area
- a former Bank of America employee turned grassroots GLBT political activist
- the executive director of the Houston Gay and Lesbian Film Festival in 2006
- a Texas A&M graduate discharged from the Corps of Cadets under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"
- a transgender lawyer who was honorably discharged from the military
- one of the organizers behind Houston Splash
- a lawyer and father who has served on the national Board of Governors for the Human Rights Campaign and helped guide Bayou City Boys Club
- a comedian and writer who dressed as Tinky Winky when a Pride Parade Grand Marshal
- a volunteer coordinator in several community organizations who was born in Swineshead.

So how did you do? Stumped? Think you know them all? Either way, come to the History Tent on June 23 to learn more!

The author, Brian Riedel, teaches the "Introduction to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Studies" at Rice University, and serves on the board of Pride Houston as its treasurer.



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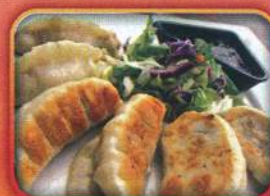
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