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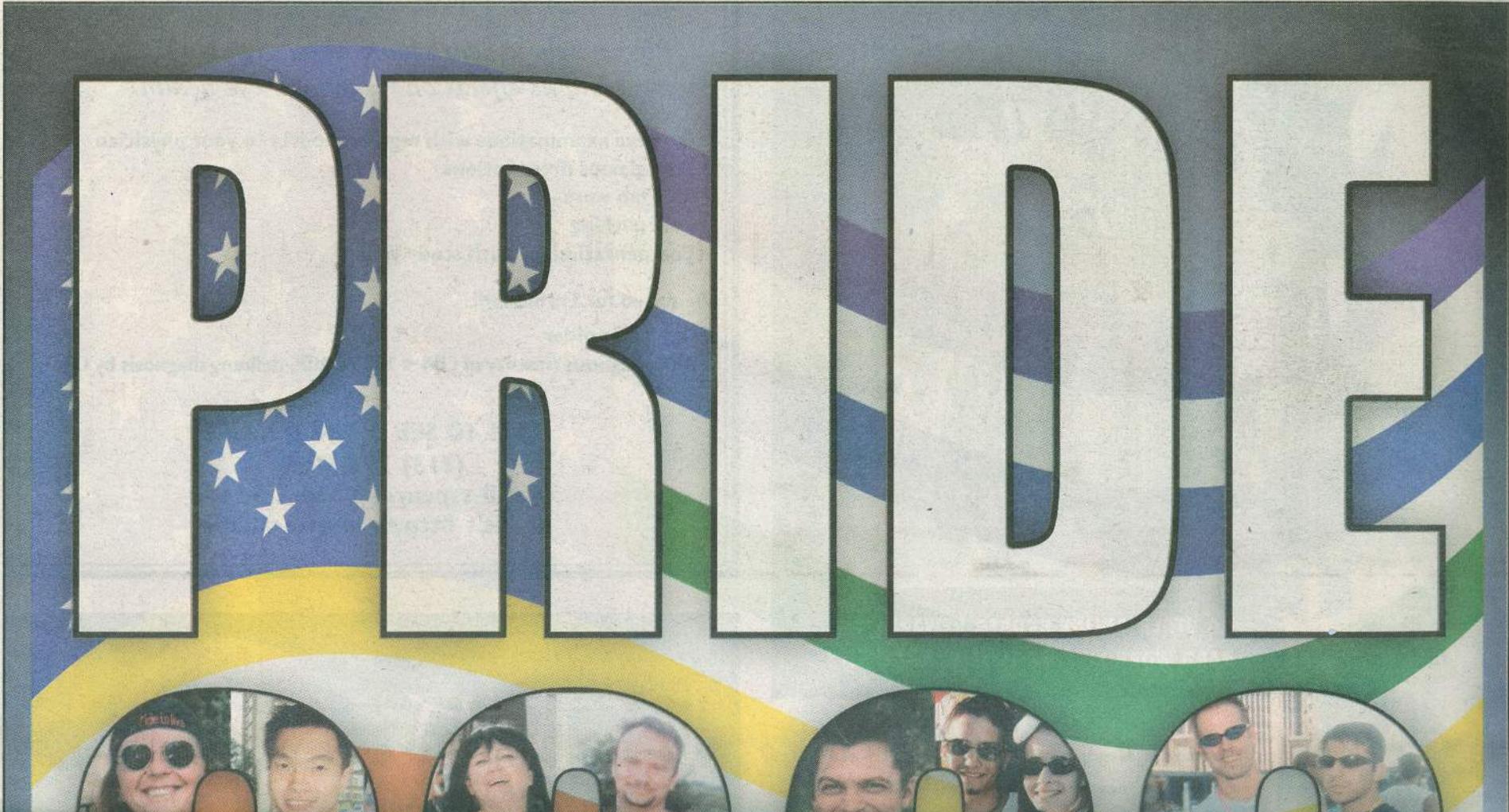


Pride Guide

The Voice offers a complete look at Houston Pride 2002, including a schedule of events and parade route map.

Inside

JUNE 28, 2002





(Cover graphic by Edward Saye, Jr. and John Nail)

PROTECTING GAY YOUTH: Houston school trustees poised to vote on anti-bias policy. **Page 4**

PRIDE WEEK: Houstonians flock to week-long activities in anticipation of Saturday's parade. **Page 4**



local news

State panel: No penalties for discrimination

Funeral commission tells gay Houston man it has no power to handle alleged incident of bias

by PENNY WEAVER

State officials have told a gay Houston man that whether or not a funeral home discriminated against him and his partner, there is nothing they can do.

Bobbie Blanton died in December, and his partner, David Diehl, said that when he went to a Houston funeral home he was refused service.

Diehl, 46, said a male employee at Garden Oaks Funeral Home in southwest Houston initially told him, before Blanton died, that the business would handle Blanton's cremation.

But when Diehl called back after Blanton died, he said that same employee told him the funeral home would not take care of the service. The employee was "apologetic," Diehl told the Houston Voice in December.

"He did not agree with his employer," Diehl said. "They said they did not recognize my relationship. They did not ask me if I had paperwork in place."

A gay partnership is not recognized through Texas law as a legal relationship, which is required to establish a partner as next of kin. According to state law, funeral



Gay Houston resident David Diehl (left) mourned the loss of his partner of 10 years, Bobbie Blanton, in mid-December, and then asked state officials to investigate a funeral home that refused to cremate Blanton. Houston attorney Mitchell Katine (top right) said this week that state officials can do nothing about alleged discrimination at a local funeral home because there are no penalties provided by law.

homes must deal with next of kin or a designated representative of the deceased.

Houston attorney Mitchell Katine, who represents Diehl, said his client had legal proof that he was to take care of Blanton's services.

"The funeral home never asked them [for the paperwork]," Katine said. "They basically said, 'We can't help you because you're in a gay relationship and Texas law doesn't recognize that.'"

Officials at Garden Oaks Funeral Home



could not be reached for comment by press time. The Voice's previous calls to the business in reference to this matter were not returned.

Katine filed a claim with the Texas Funeral Service Commission on behalf of Diehl. The panel investigated the case, but this month sent a letter to Katine informing him that, "The issue of discrimination does not fall within the purview of this agency," according to the letter.

"This means that there's a loophole in the law," Katine said this week. "If there's no punishment for people who fail to follow the documentation that we have obtained through the legislature to try to make our relationships [legally comparable to those] of married people...then why follow it?"

Katine, a gay attorney who also represents two Houston men in a high-profile case challenging the state's homosexual conduct law, said he was shocked by the funeral commission's response.

"We tell all our clients: 'As long as you have these documents, you'll be protected,'" Katine said. "It turns out that that's not exactly correct. It turns out that there's no penalty for discrimination."

Documents such as power of attorney, a will and designation of a guardian are some of the items that gay partners can

obtain in Texas to legalize each other's rights as a couple. But if those items are not honored, as alleged in the Blanton case, it takes time for gay partners to attempt to get the documents enforced.

"The problem with funeral arrangements is you don't have a year to argue about it," Katine said. "The legislature intended for it to be honored immediately, but there's no penalty if they don't."

"That's just outrageous," he added. "Nobody ever imagined there wouldn't be any penalties. We need some new laws to close this loophole."

Katine called on legislators to "put some teeth behind the laws."

He did note that the funeral commission did not state that it found evidence of discrimination by Garden Oaks.

"Although we believe there was discrimination, they are not saying that they found discrimination," Katine said. "They're simply saying that if there was, there's nothing [they] could do about it."

"There's nothing they can do because there's nothing that prohibits discrimination," he added. "That's the loophole that we've now uncovered."

"No one ever thought this would happen. We all thought we were protected."

The letter to Katine from the Texas Funeral Service Commission did state that O.C. "Chet" Robbins, executive director, would refer the case to the attorney general's Consumer Protection Division "for review and possible action."

PAULINA RUBIO
BORDER GIRL



local news

Houston Pride 2002 is on a roll

As the fun leads up to an activity-packed weekend, organizers are pleased with Pride so far

For full details on this weekend's Pride 2002, see the special Pull-Out Section in today's issue.

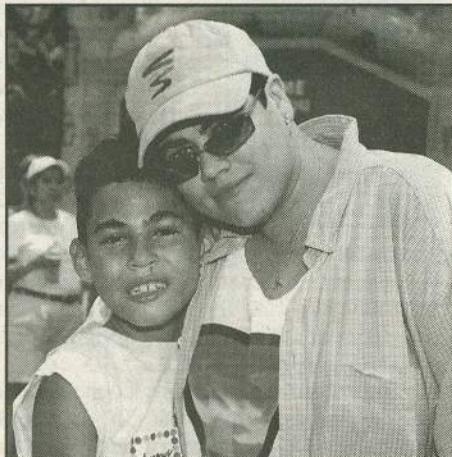
By PENNY WEAVER

A busy Pride Week for gay Houstonians continues right into this weekend and the massive annual Houston Pride Parade.

"It's been going very well. I've had the opportunity to go to a few events myself... and they've been excellent," said Troy Christensen, communications director for the Pride Committee of Houston.

The celebration began in earnest at the Pride Kick-off Party last Friday, June 21, at Sonoma restaurant. Musical and stage entertainment — along with plenty of socializing and refreshments — filled the evening.

"I think everybody had a lot of fun at



Earlier in Pride Week, families gathered in Hermann Park for the JPMorganChase-sponsored picnic as part of Pride Family & Youth Fun Day. (Photo by Dalton Dehart)

that," Christensen said.

Members of the Pride Committee have hustled through events for the week officially titled the Houston Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Pride 2002. Numerous volunteers and groups are assisting the committee all week with

social, cultural, educational and charitable events to celebrate Pride.

A number of people participated in Gay Day at AstroWorld last Saturday, June 22, as part of the Pride Committee's designated Health & Recreation Day.

Also that Saturday, leaders at the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center hosted an art festival, featuring donated work by local artists for auction. Proceeds benefit the community center.

On Sunday, June 23, Family & Youth Day was celebrated via a picnic at Hermann Park sponsored by JPMorganChase.

Like other members of the Pride Committee, Christensen is busy organizing events all week, and can only attend a few of the activities. But he said he has had good reports on all events so far, including the picnic.

"We had a couple of people go to that and they said it was really a lot of fun and there were quite a few people there. That was pretty successful," he said.

On Monday, a reception was held for this year's Pride grand marshals. The event, hosted by the Brazos River Bottom and The Royal, Sovereign & Imperial Court of the Single Star of Houston, Inc. (RSICSS), turned

into a grand marshal history lesson, too.

"That was pretty neat this year because they introduced all the past grand marshals who attended," Christensen said. "There was quite an array of people, especially from about 1990 and on."

Tuesday was Commemoration Day, and the Stonewall Lawyers Association of Greater Houston (SLAGH) presented a panel of speakers to discuss the gay civil rights movement.

"It was a really good presentation," Christensen said. "They're going to re-create it at some point in the future so they can tape it and get that oral history on videotape."

Spirituality Day on Wednesday included an Interfaith Pride Worship Service and an Introduction to Buddhism. According to Christensen, each event drew a crowd.

"[For] the Buddhist event...it was a pretty packed room," he said.

Thursday was Pride Worldwide Day, and included an HRC Pride event, commemoration of National HIV Testing Day, and "Love Knows No Borders" — A GLBT Immigration Talk.

Friday, June 28, begins Pride's big week-

Please see PRIDE 2002, on Page 10

Houston trustees to vote on pro-gay policy

School district may add sexual orientation protection to student conduct code

By PENNY WEAVER



HISD Board of Education President Laurie Bricker said the district's trustees were to vote Thursday afternoon on a new non-

The suggestion to add sexual orientation as a protected status in the student code of conduct was made by trustee Esther Campos. She has said the idea wasn't in response to any specific problems with harassment.

"I just feel like we're being open and honest if we include it. It's just to protect all children," Campos told the Houston Chronicle.

Bricker said the question before the board is not whether or not a policy of tol-

about creating a safe and harassment-free environment for all your students.

"A listing of groups is necessary to emphasize the harassment nature of these comments aimed at fellow students perceived to be a member of a specific group," Null planned to tell the board. "In the Romer v. Evans case, the U.S. Supreme Court said, 'Enumeration is the essential device used to make the duty not to discriminate concrete and to provide guid-

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Houston trustees to vote on pro-gay policy

School district may add sexual orientation protection to student conduct code

By PENNY WEAVER

Trustees for the Houston Independent School District were to vote Thursday evening on a non-discrimination policy that may include sexual orientation as a protected status.

"What our board is working toward is a stronger and more comprehensive code of student conduct that includes [a ban on] discrimination against anyone for any reason," said Laurie Bricker, school board president. "I know that we all believe in that; we're just trying to figure out the most efficient and enforceable way of putting that in the code of student conduct or board policy."

The board was to meet at 4 p.m. Thursday, and those scheduled to speak during the session included Jim Null, a parent and member of Houston's Parents, Families & Friends of Gays & Lesbians (PFLAG) chapter.

"I called and asked to be scheduled. It's an open session and each person who requests to speak gets three minutes," Null said Thursday afternoon. "I think PFLAG has a great deal of credibility with HISD administration, and I thought maybe we could make a difference at this time. I suspect they're going to get more negative feedback than positive feedback, and I thought that I could provide some positive feedback."

Null, who is chair of PFLAG's educa-



HISD Board of Education President Laurie Bricker said the district's trustees were to vote Thursday afternoon on a new non-discrimination policy for the student code of conduct.

tion and grant writing committees, offer the Houston Voice a preview of his comments to the board. They include:

"I received an e-mail last week from a middle school student in an adjacent school district who has contemplated suicide because of the persistent, daily harassment he has to cope with because of his sexual orientation," Null's statement reads. "Apart from the tremendous toll on his life, inaction by his school district will ultimately cost them hundreds of thousands of dollars. He is already gathering documentation.

"I know of a student in a second suburban district who has already contacted an attorney because of the failure of his school district to protect him from daily physical abuse and verbal harassment. It is to your credit that you have the foresight to act to forestall harassment based on sexual orientation before it reaches this boiling point."

Null's comments also praise HISD for a session earlier this year that provided training for principals and assistant principals in issues dealing with gay youth.

The suggestion to add sexual orientation as a protected status in the student code of conduct was made by trustee Esther Campos. She has said the idea wasn't in response to any specific problems with harassment.

"I just feel like we're being open and honest if we include it. It's just to protect all children," Campos told the Houston Chronicle.

Bricker said the question before the board is not whether or not a policy of tolerance will be included in the code of conduct, but how that policy will be worded. The trustees will have to decide on either a blanket statement of tolerance or a statement that includes a listing of categories of groups protected against bias.

"The absolute pride that I feel in our board is reflected in the fact that we're not struggling whether or not to include sexual orientation" as a protected category, Bricker said. The decision, she said, is simply "the most effective way to send a very clear and concise message" for tolerance.

Other board members have said that if the trustees decide to list categories of people against whom discrimination will not be tolerated, then sexual orientation should be included.

School district spokeswoman Heather Browne has said that the proposed change simply would reinforce the district's stance against discrimination.

In his prepared statement, Null also said: "These proposed changes are not about giving any groups special recognition or special rights. They are not about sex and they are not about religion. They are not about contravening First Amendment rights of free expression. They are only

about creating a safe and harassment-free environment for all your students.

"A listing of groups is necessary to emphasize the harassment nature of these comments aimed at fellow students perceived to be a member of a specific group," Null planned to tell the board. "In the Romer v. Evans case, the U.S. Supreme Court said, 'Enumeration is the essential device used to make the duty not to discriminate concrete and to provide guidance for those who must comply.'

"Should you include sexual orientation to this list? Yes, absolutely yes," Null's statement reads. "The all-purpose way of ridiculing anything in school today is, 'That's so gay.' Any boy who isn't the accuser's stereotype of the macho man is perceived to be gay. Any girl who doesn't want to have sex with all the boys is called a lesbian or dyke."

The code of conduct is distributed to every student at the beginning of the school year and lists the rights and responsibilities of students. The current HISD policy requires students to refrain from "any verbal abuse of others, including name-calling or derogatory statements."

The proposal before the board of education, which was tabled at the last board meeting, was to add to that statement: "...including derogatory comments to another person because of that person's race, color, religion, national origin, disability or physical/personal appearance."

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local news

Pride festivities continue through Sunday

PRIDE 2002, continued from Page 4

end, with concerts, the first-ever Pride cabaret and a black-tie celebration. The fun continues with Saturday's annual Houston Pride Parade, plus a number of both official and unofficial Pride parties. Sunday winds down the festivities with a parade awards event.

Overall, organizers are pleased so far with the strength of Pride 2002.

"It's been great," Christensen said. "It's really wonderful to see the diversity of the events, and also the people attending the events. It's been a real good cross-section of the community."

Volunteers are still welcome to assist with Saturday's parade, he noted, although response to the call for help has been solid.

"It's been pretty good. We always need more, though," Christensen said. "We'll still take volunteers. If people just want to show up on the day of [the parade], we will take them and we will put them to work."

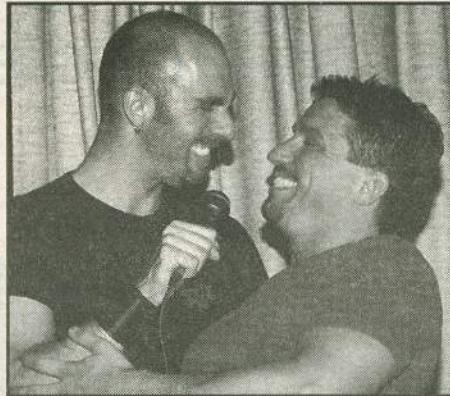
Parking on and around the parade route

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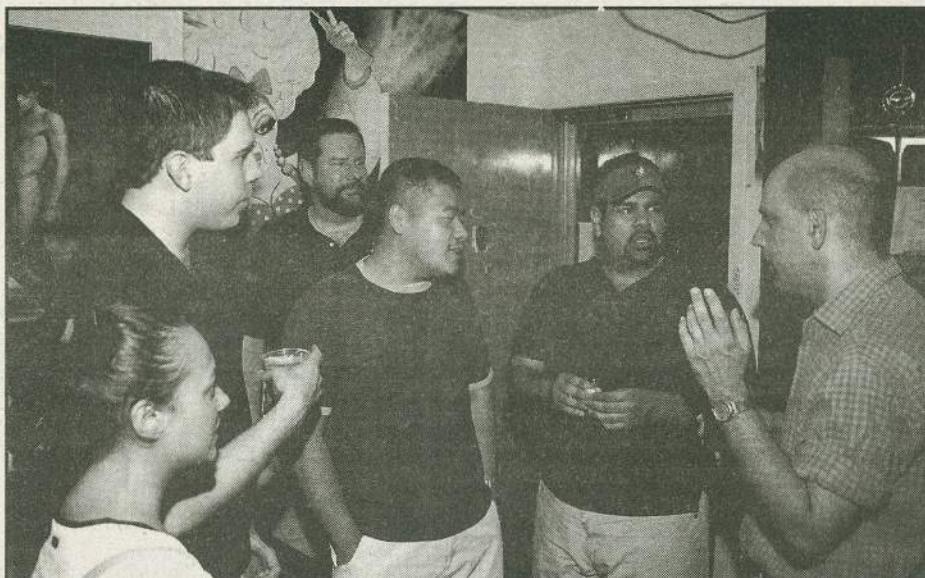
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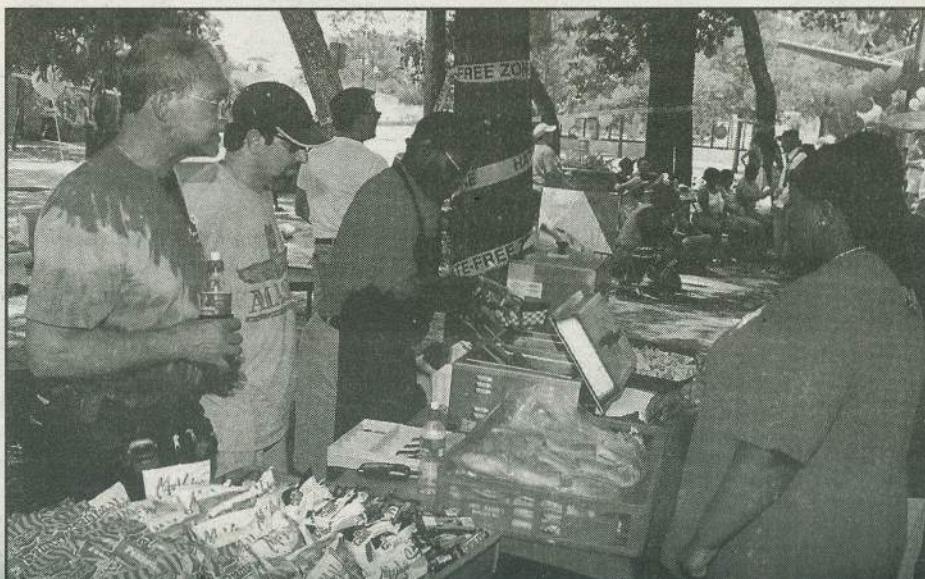
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The Pride Kick-off Party, held Friday, June 21, at Sonoma restaurant, featured live entertainment on stage for the many who attended to get Pride off to a fun start. (Photos by Dalton Dehart)



Cast members of 'Comfort & Joy' presented the play in a special performance during Pride Week on Wednesday at Theatre Suburbia.



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Parking on and around the parade route



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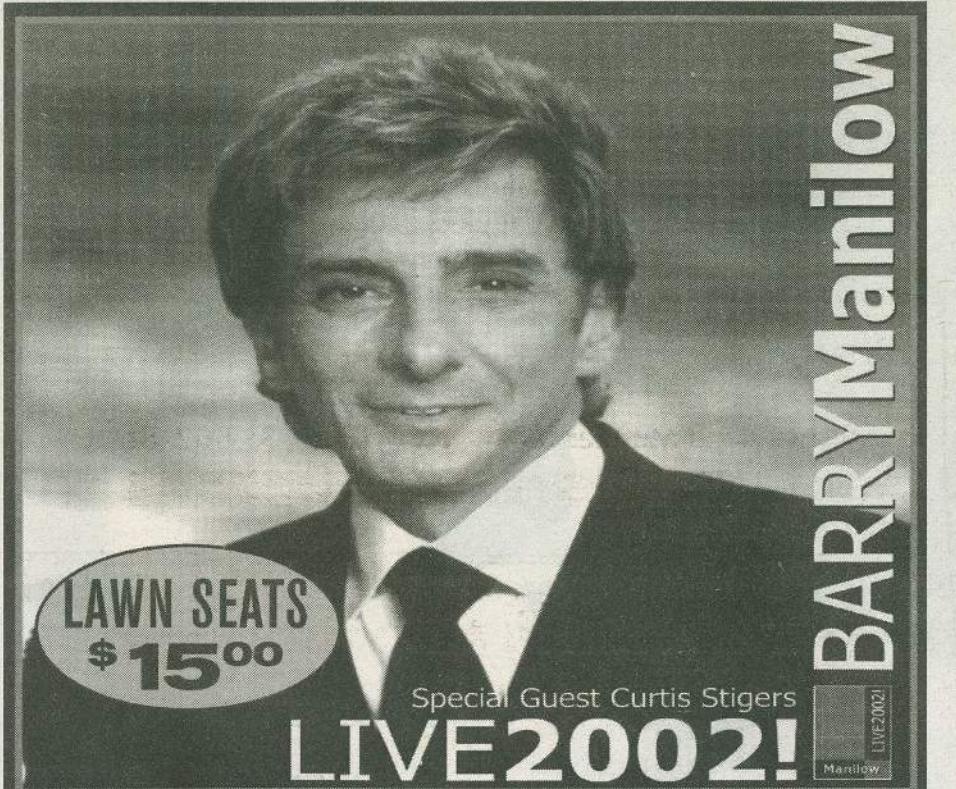
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E-mail: info@pridehouston.org

will be limited all day Saturday in anticipation of the event. This area includes Westheimer, West Alabama, Dunlavy and McDuffie. The parade proceeds from Woodhead and Westheimer to Whitney. Westheimer will be closed to both traffic and parking between Shepherd and Taft at 8 p.m.

No parking will be allowed on the north side of Hawthorne, Harold, Kipling and Marshall between Dunlavy and McDuffie and on both sides of Hazard and Woodhead between West Alabama and Westheimer, in preparation for the parade.

Also, there will be no parking on both sides of Lovett between Taft and Montrose.



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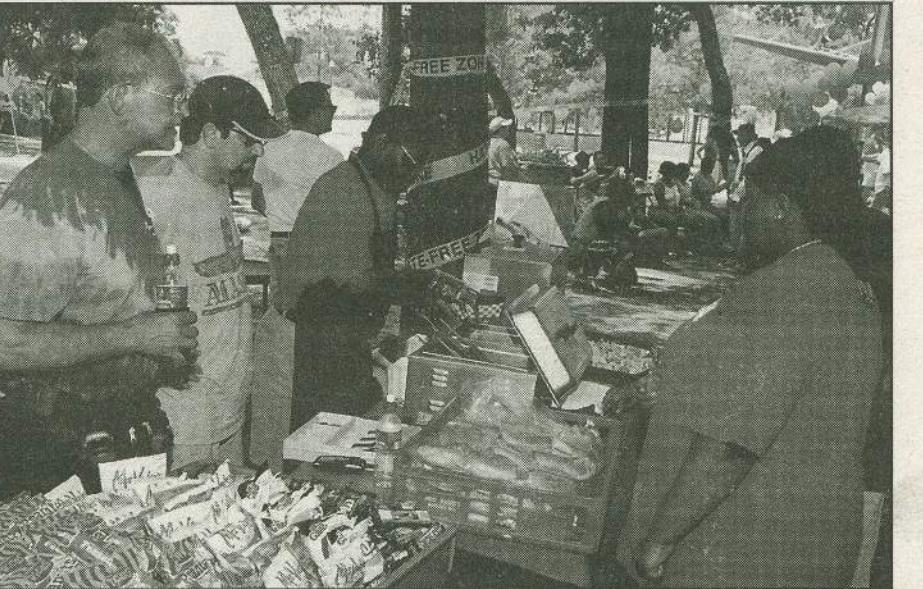
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Cast members of 'Comfort & Joy' presented the play in a special performance during Pride Week on Wednesday at Theatre Suburbia.



Both food and fun were served up last Sunday at the **Pride family picnic** (top), which emphasized activities for children, including a visit to the Houston Zoo. The Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center hosted an **art festival** (above) on Saturday, June 22, as a fund-raiser for the facility. Lesbian singer **Kristie Stremel** of Kansas City, Mo., (right) entertained the early crowd at the **Pride Kick-off Party**. (Photos by Dalton Dehart)



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HOUSTON VOICE

JUNE 28, 2002

PAGE 12

editorial

Adjust your Pride volume

Quietly or loudly, everyone can contribute to the movement that Gay Pride embodies.

By PENNY WEAVER

COWBOY BOOTS AND pickup trucks may not seem to go along with rainbow stickers and pink triangles, but gay Houstonians somehow make that mix work.

And never more so than at Houston Pride each summer. Gay folks may express how they feel about their sexual orientation in different ways every day, but when Pride comes around, almost everyone joins the cause with rainbow streamers in tow.

This past year offered a mixed bag of victories and defeats for Houston gays, which heightens the need for a jubilant, inspiring Pride this week, but with a healthy dose of protest. There are few higher profile ways than Pride to recognize the progress gay Texans have made, while at the same time illustrating the challenges that still remain.

Showing pride — or not — is an inevitable part of the coming out process. It's hard to imagine waving a rainbow flag from behind the closet door. But as we ease out into the open, our individual pride in who we are is uplifted.

There comes that time when almost everyone is "out and proud," and up go the rainbow colors, the bold bumper stickers. It's an out-loud declaration that we are not only aware but have accepted and are at ease with our sexual orientation. Those who eschew bumper sticker thinking in the rest of their lives may still make their own statements, talking freely about same-sex loved ones among co-workers and family.

It's worth remembering, in case you forgot, that much of the world views gay pride as a defiant, in-your-face gesture to the establishment. We are not unique

Being comfortable with being gay can simply mean living a quiet life, with no marching in the streets or rallying at city hall.

True comfort for gays doesn't need advertisement; it doesn't need to be said. We can just go about our everyday lives with our sexual orientation no more an issue than our hair or eye color.

COMFORT IS ONE THING, BUT complacency is another, and the line between the two is fine enough to get blurred often. If we become complacent, we risk losing what we've become comfortable with, and we fail on the promise to make life better for those who will follow in our footsteps.

Right now, Pride is our safeguard against complacency. The moment we relax too much, the push for gay civil rights suffers. At this point in the movement, it is too important to demand fair laws, to declare that we are ready and waiting to receive equal treatment with heterosexuals on issues of insurance benefits, marriage, adoption and more.

Not everyone is willing or ready to march in the streets for gay rights. Gay, bisexual, transgender or straight, not all

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Issue 1131

By PEGGY WEAVER

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Houston has come a long way since the first Pride parade back in 1979, which attracted an estimated 10,000 spectators. These days, the first-of-its-kind nighttime parade and festival is viewed by some 100,000 people.

Politically, the city has progressed from an overwhelmingly anti-gay vote by citizens in 1985 to last fall's almost-too-close-to-call vote on the anti-gay City Prop. 2. Even though voters approved the measure, gay political activists still called the effort a success, thanks to the narrow margin by which our civil rights were defeated.

It seems that now, more than ever, we need Houston Pride. But what we really should look forward to is that day when there is no need for Gay Pride celebrations at all.

PEOPLE SHOW PRIDE IN DIFFERENT ways. Some put theirs in bright colors on the bumper of their car. Others wear pride on their shirts or even their skin. Many show no outward rainbow signs at all.

Showing pride — or not — is an inevitable part of the coming out process. It's hard to imagine waving a rainbow flag from behind the closet door. But as we ease out into the open, our individual pride in who we are is uplifted.

There comes that time when almost everyone is "out and proud," and up go the rainbow colors, the bold bumper stickers. It's an out-loud declaration that we are not only aware but have accepted and are at ease with our sexual orientation. Those who eschew bumper sticker thinking in the rest of their lives may still make their own statements, talking freely about same-sex loved ones among co-workers and family.

It's worth remembering, in case you forgot, that much of the world views gay pride as a defiant, in-your-face gesture to the straight world. We want everyone to know that we're gay even though many don't understand, don't approve or just don't care, whether they think it's none of their business or it just doesn't matter to them.

My dad once told me, "No one cares that you're gay." We were talking about our family, and he basically was saying that the fact that I'm gay is just another detail, like my hair color or my height. They don't think of me as their gay daughter or sister; they just think of me as Penny. The gender of the person with whom I fall in love doesn't matter.

But we all know that it does matter in everyday life: It matters at our jobs, in health care, for our partners and children. When we come out, it is often in only some aspects of our lives, and sometimes in every portion of our lives. But those personal milestones and all the rainbow stickers in the world don't mean that we're comfortable with ourselves.

Comfort is a good thing. When we're comfortable with our sexual orientation, we don't need to advertise it.

True comfort for gays doesn't need advertisement; it doesn't need to be said. We can just go about our everyday lives with our sexual orientation no more an issue than our hair or eye color.

COMFORT IS ONE THING, BUT complacency is another, and the line between the two is fine enough to get blurred often. If we become complacent, we risk losing what we've become comfortable with, and we fail on the promise to make life better for those who will follow in our footsteps.

Right now, Pride is our safeguard against complacency. The moment we relax too much, the push for gay civil rights suffers. At this point in the movement, it is too important to demand fair laws, to declare that we are ready and waiting to receive equal treatment with heterosexuals on issues of insurance benefits, marriage, adoption and more.

Not everyone is willing or ready to march in the streets for gay rights. Gay, bisexual, transgender or straight, not all of those who are in favor of equal treatment for everyone are the types to take up the torch and run with it.

But Pride is something for everyone. Put on your sequin-covered, rainbow-colored cap or gown. Drape your vehicle in streamers and glitter. Dance in the streets beneath a rainbow flag. Get a new rainbow tattoo. Wear a Pride T-shirt. Stand up high on a float and wave all through this Saturday's Pride Parade.

Or just show up to watch.

However you do it, you're making your statement — loudly or quietly — in favor of equal treatment for all. And when enough people stand up in their own way and contribute to the voice of reason, it will be heard and heeded.



Peggy Weaver is editor of the *Houston Voice* and may be reached at editor@houstonvoice.com.



From a disengaged tan sprawling across a garden of which restaurant preparation of garden emits come the incense pagoda style and grances of fire.

The subdues primarily accented sculptures depicting primary religious statues praying headaddresses in of gilded gold paintings depicting monasteries and

My friend appetizer that the plate were

MORNINGSIDE variety of farro tastes. For the start, I would Sampler plate includes beef etable spring rolls, tofu, and skewers.

Except for gruulent flavors and sour sauce the appetizer is delectable. Ed to satiation broiled to tenderization for a smooth vegetables and eggrolls mingling blend of fresh and crispy and savory.

My friend and I were looking for portions on the sampling, but However, we had entrees and we

letters

It's too soon to say Pride isn't needed

To the Editor:

Well it's that time of year again: when angst-ridden columnists begin their derisive questioning of Pride. Most notably, this usually comes in national publications like the Advocate that seem to take perverse pride in finding heterosexuals — any heterosexual — to grace their cover.

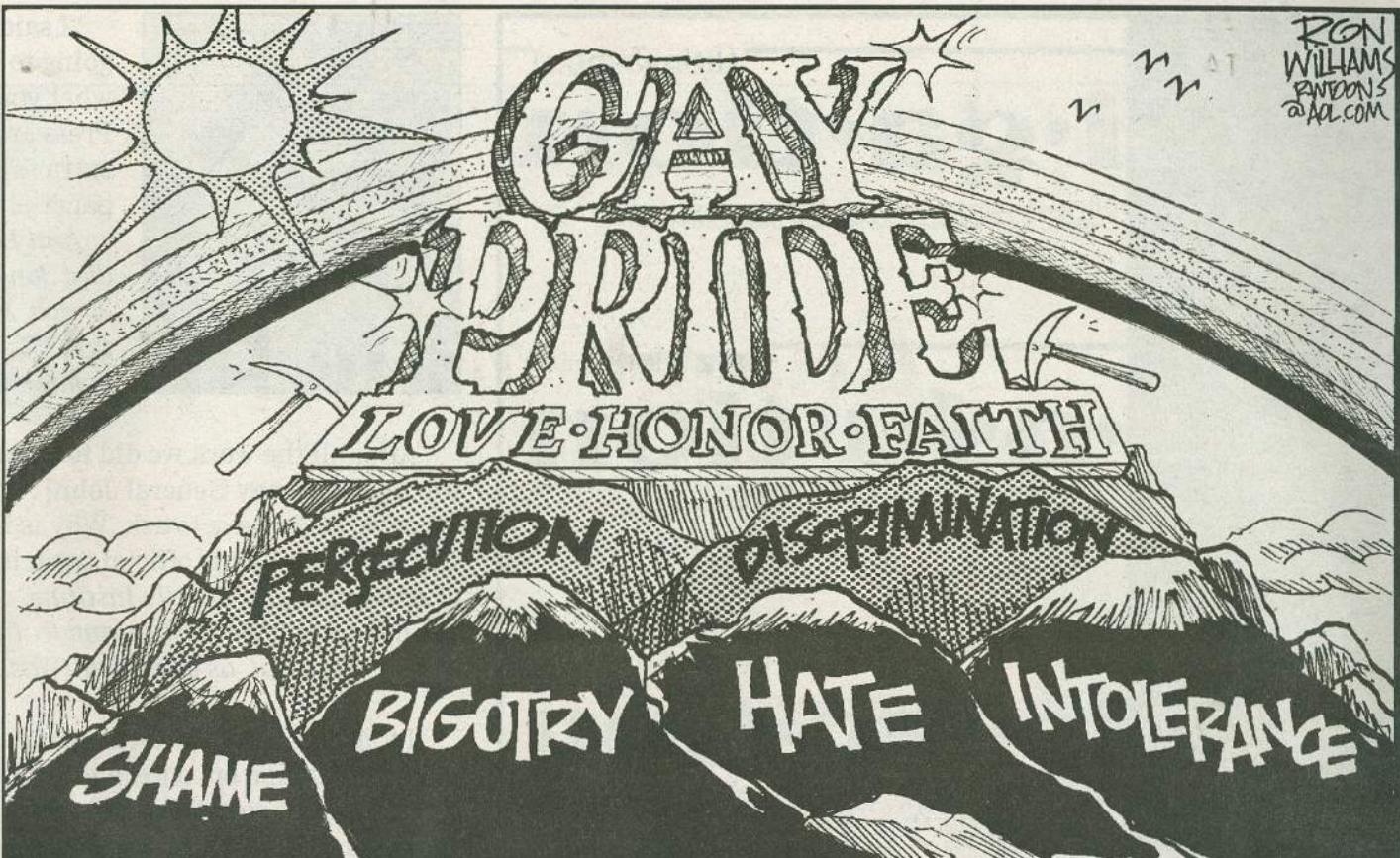
I'm always bemused by these usual suspects pontificating from the safety of their East and West coast ghettos about "how unnecessary it all is" or "how meaningless Pride has become."

"How bored we are," goes their snide refrain — both from the right and the left wing. The left bemoans corporate sponsorships "taking over." The right complains of fetishes on parade and the left-leaning politics of most of the participants.

I suppose if I lived in San Francisco, New York or Los Angeles, where some basic civil liberties are actually on the books, I too would be a bit jaded and looking for that "post-Gay" era that was supposed to sally forth a few years back.

But I don't. I live in a state that only very recently was willing to say that beating someone up for being gay is a hate crime. Private sexual conduct between two persons of the same sex is still a crime here. And voters in my hometown blocked our city from even considering domestic partner benefits for gay and lesbian couples.

A few states further east into the old South and you're confronted by judges who think that biblical admonitions about killing homosexuals are not only OK, but more than reason enough to strip a lesbian mother of her parental rights and send her kids back to a heterosexual father who beats them.



seen in the last decade, areas of the country that are supposedly "safe" have seen an up-tick in anti-gay violence. The international scene is far from rosy, either — whether show trials in the Muslim world or anti-gay initiatives in the former Soviet-bloc, it's not safe out there either.

This brings me back to Pride and why it continues to be important. Yes, our celebrations are raucous, over-the-top, sometimes discomfiting and often outrageous. Our community is all that and more. Mostly, however, our celebrations are joyous and visible. And visibility is power.

It is the power to touch someone who is having a hard time hanging on because

the power to help someone turn to a bully and say, "Enough! Stop it."

It is the power of numbers that even cynical politicians can't afford to ignore. It is the power to remind all those who wish us the death of invisibility that we are here.

Protest us, watch us or join us in the celebration — we're not going away.

And that is something to take Pride in; indeed, to celebrate.

MICHAEL CRAIG
Houston

We want to hear your voice!

Send the editor your letters (400 words maximum) or op-ed submissions (800 words maximum). Names may be withheld upon request, but submissions must include a name and phone number for verification.

Send c/o Editor, Houston Voice, 500 Lovett Blvd., Suite 200, Houston, Texas 77006; fax (713)



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Even with all the progress we've

seen in the last decade, areas of the country that are supposedly "safe" have seen an up-tick in anti-gay violence. The international scene is far from rosy, either — whether show trials in the Muslim world or anti-gay initiatives in the former Soviet-bloc, it's not safe out there either.

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It is the power to touch someone who is having a hard time hanging on because of the pressures of growing up gay. It is

the power to help someone turn to a bull and say, "Enough! Stop it."

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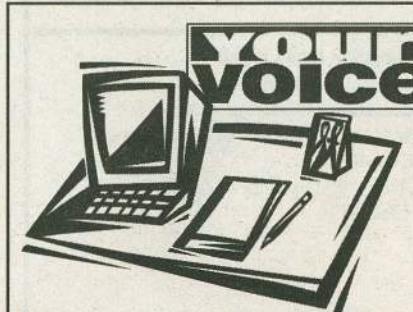
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Dykes To Watch Out For by Alison Bechdel

cyborg nation



www.dykestowatchoutfor.net

Special
Pull-out Section

Houston
Voice

Houston Pride 2002



Inside



Inside

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houston pride 2002

Line up for the 2002 Houston Pride Parade

Annual parade is the highlight of the weekend to wrap up this year's Pride Week

See page 5 for a map of the 2002 Pride Parade route.

By ELLA TYLER

The 24th annual Houston Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Pride Parade begins at 8:45 Saturday night with a record number of entries.

"We had 134 applications at the cut-off time. I believe this is the largest number of applications we have ever had," said Troy Christensen, communications director for the Pride Committee of Houston.

Parade organizers are excited about what they say will be a bigger and better fest than ever.

"A new entry, which I think will be a real crowd-pleaser, is from the Houston Fire Department," Christensen said. "Fire Chief Chris Connealy and community liaison Elmo Delasbour will be in the top of the Tower Six truck. This is the one they use for high rise rescues."

A history-making parade entry from last year will not re-appear in the 2002 parade, however. The 2001 parade was the first to include an entry from the Houston Police Department, but the department will not be officially represented this year.

"We did not get an entry from the police department this year, but the library entry will be from the entire system, not just the Montrose branch, this time," Christensen said. "Montrose's new City Council member, Ada Edwards, will have an entry, and Mayor [Lee] Brown will be [in the parade for the third year in a row]."

According to Christensen, other political entries include City Council member Gaylor Cannon, State Rep. Garrett Collier,



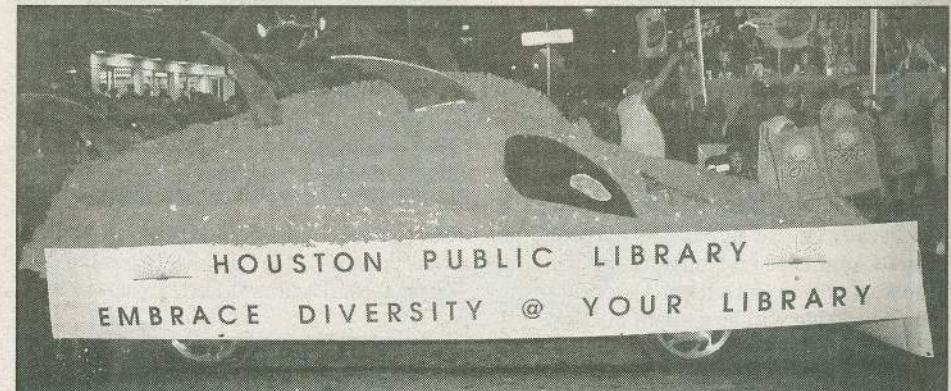
Troy Christensen, this year's communications director for the Pride Committee of Houston, sweated it out in last year's parade along with thousands of other gay Houstonians. (Photo by Dalton Dehart)



Pride 2002 in Houston wraps up this weekend with a flurry of events, highlighted by Saturday's parade, but also including musical performances, theater and — of course — hours and hours of parties. (Photo by Kimberly Thompson)



Annise Parker (right), the only openly gay member of the Houston City Council, participated in the 2001 Pride Parade with her partner, Kathy Hubbard. Parker is slated to again be part of the parade this weekend, along with a number of other politicians. (Photo by Dalton Dehart)



Last year, the Montrose branch of the city's library system was the only facility represented in the Pride parade. This year, organizers say, the library's entire network will be part of the Saturday night parade. (Photo by Dalton Dehart)

of-town entry. Awards named Edison and Rainbow Lights are for lighting on nonprofessionally and professionally built units, respectively, and the Houston and Texas trophies go to nonprofessionally built and professionally built motorized units.

All entries are eligible for the Stonewall, Pride Worldwide and Spirit of Montrose prizes. Judges for the event

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the Pride Committee of Houston.

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According to Christensen, other political entries include City Council member Gordon Quan, state Rep. Garnett Coleman, the Stonewall Democrats and River Oaks Area Democratic Women, whose delegation includes gay-friendly state Rep. Debra Danburg.

"We are delighted that Larry Bagneris, a former Houston activist who is now director of New Orleans Human Rights Commission, will be at the parade," Christensen added.

The parade begins at Woodhead and Westheimer streets and continues along Westheimer to Whitney. Two announcer's stations have been added to the route. Esterio Latino of 102.9 FM will be announcing in English and Spanish at a booth near Club Rainbow, near the Westheimer curve.

As in the past, Maria Todd of KRBE 104 and Ernie Manouse of Channel 8's weekday news will be announcing from the judges' stand at Lincoln and Westheimer.

Finally, MIX 96.6 will be announcing at the end of the route.

"We wanted to spread people along the route," Christensen explained. Each of the announcer's stands will begin playing music at 6 p.m. on parade night.

Another change this year is that there

tor for the Pride Committee of Houston, sweated it out in last year's parade along with thousands of other gay Houstonians. (Photo by Dalton Dehart)



Pride 2002 in Houston wraps up this weekend with a flurry of events, highlighted by Saturday's parade, but also including musical performances, theater and — of course — hours and hours of parties. (Photo by Kimberly Thompson)

will be a vendors' area in the parking lot just east of Montrose and Westheimer. Various free samples will be handed out, Christensen said. Pride merchandise will be sold at a booth near Copycom and roving vendors will be selling items during the parade, he added.

Vendors with product giveaways include Perfect Places Travel, Green Mountain Energy, Trojan Condoms, Nair for Men, Arm & Hammer Breath Mints, Red Bull and Houston Voice and Eclipse.

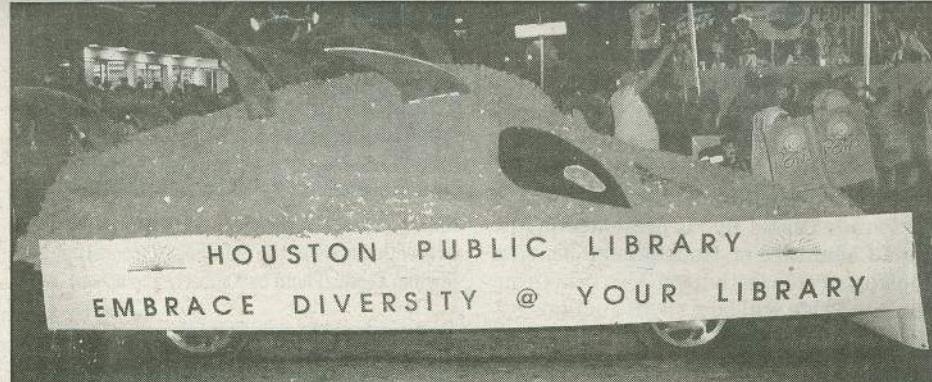
The famous parade disco ball has been retired and will be replaced by what Christensen describes as a festival light wall.

"It will be a large scaffolding, 25 feet tall, with 'PRIDE' in 8-foot-tall lighted letters, near Westheimer and Montrose. People can see it all along the route," he explained.

The parade really represents the diversity of the community, Christensen said.

"We have non-profits, community businesses, and social groups. One neat entry is GoGirlsMusic.com, who will also be doing a concert on Friday at Rhythm Room on Washington," he said.

The prizes recognize the diversity of the entries as well, Christensen noted. The Ruby Slipper Award goes to the best walking unit, and the Gypsy Rose Award is for the best out-



Last year, the Montrose branch of the city's library system was the only facility represented in the Pride parade. This year, organizers say, the library's entire network will be part of the Saturday night parade. (Photo by Dalton Dehart)

of-town entry. Awards named Edison and Rainbow Lights are for lighting on non-professionally and professionally built units, respectively, and the Houston and Texas trophies go to non-professionally built and professionally built motorized units.

All entries are eligible for the Stonewall, Pride Worldwide and Spirit of Montrose prizes. Judges for the event include Kay Dayus, Jone Devlin, Rich Arenschieldt and Fred Walters, Jr.

Prizes will be awarded on Sunday afternoon at the "Pride Recovery" party at Rich's. The party begins at 4 p.m. and trophies will be presented at 6, Christensen said. Cover is \$2 with proceeds to go to the Pride Committee.

The parade is not the only entertainment this weekend. Today is officially Arts Appreciation Day. The First Annual Pride Cabaret, "Before the Parade Passes By," will be at the Alley Theatre. This all-singing, all-dancing showcase is directed by Ken Williamson, local actor and director.

Stars of the show include Lauren Anderson of the Houston Ballet and Paul Hope of the Alley, as well as other local talent. Tickets range from \$25 to 100, with \$100 and \$75 tickets allowing purchasers to attend a center stage cast reception at the end of the show.

2002 Houston Pride supporters

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Sparklets
Whole Foods Market

Merchandise Outlets:

Basic Brothers, 1232 Westheimer
Black Hawk Leather, 711 Fairview
The Meat Rack, 2915 San Jacinto
Montrose-area Walgreens at 3317 Montrose,
1919 W. Gray and 950 Studemont

PRIDE INFO

Pride Committee of Houston
P.O. Box 66071 • Houston, TX 77266-6071
PrideLine: 713-529-6979
www.pridehouston.org
E-mail: info@pridehouston.org

houston pride 2002

Houston Pride 2002 Parade Weekend Lineup

FRIDAY, JUNE 28

GoGirlsRock! Houston Pride

GoGirlsMusic.com, the Houston-based online community of women artists, and the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center present a concert featuring Liviya Compean, Carol Plunk, Astrogin, Nancy Ford and other performers... "cuz chicks rock!"

7 p.m.-2 a.m. • Cost: \$7

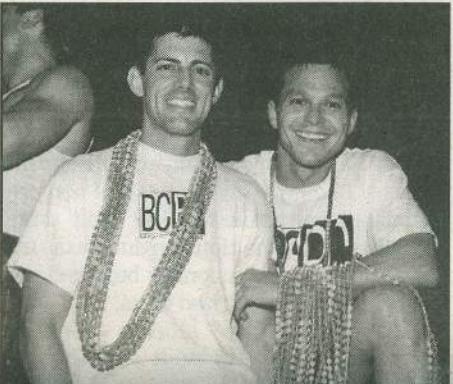
Rhythm Room • 1815 Washington
e-mail: info@gogirlsmusic.com
www.gogirlsmusic.com

Featured Performers:

8 p.m. Melinda Mones of Houston
8:45 p.m. Astrogin of Dallas
9:30 p.m. Amanda's Waiting of New York, NY
10:30 p.m. Beth Puorro & members of Echoes of Austin
11:30 p.m. Carol Plunk of Memphis, Tenn.
12:30 a.m. Liviya Compean of Houston



Weekend Pride entertainment includes plenty of parties for gay Houstonians both before and after the annual parade. (Photo by Dalton Dehart)



"Pride American Style"

The Official After-hours Pride Party

Spy Nightclub hosts the Official After-hours Pride Party: "Pride.02 American Style." Immediately after the official post-parade party at Rich's, join the Spoiled Boyz



Dirty Little Showtunes...Encore!

Relax and be entertained from the stage the night before the annual parade. Laughter was never this nasty - again - in this musical revue with new songs.

8 p.m. • Tickets: \$20

Theatre New West • 1415 California
713-394-0464

Before the Parade Passes By

This first-ever Pride cabaret features the best in local talent all on one stage. The performance includes favorite Broadway melodies in a musical celebration of gay lives. Directed by Ken Williamson, "Before the Parade Passes By" is presented by the Pride Committee of Houston and benefits Houston's Pride festivities. Also benefiting Houston Pride will be a silent auction.

8 p.m. • Tickets: \$25-\$100
Alley Theatre • 615 Texas
713-228-8421

Dirty Little Showtunes...Encore!

Relax and be entertained from the stage the night before the annual parade. Laughter was never this nasty - again - in this musical revue with new songs.

8 p.m. • Tickets: \$20
Theatre New West • 1415 California
713-394-0464

Baile Internacional 2002

This black-tie celebration and dance is a fund-raiser for gay and lesbian community groups.

9:30 p.m.-1:30 a.m.
Ripley House Ballroom • 4410 Navigation
713-522-9564

Frequency Friday — Pride Edition

Special guest The Lady Bunny performs at this special edition of Rich's high-energy house music night. A portion of the proceeds benefits Pride Committee of Houston.

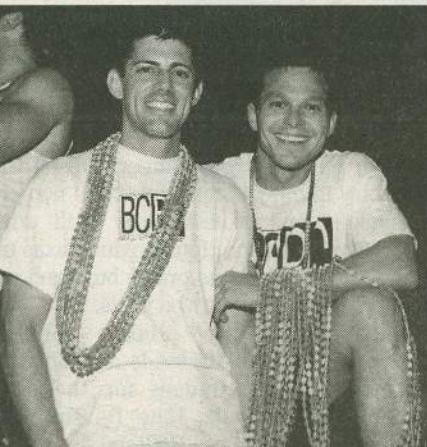
10 p.m.-4 a.m. • Cost: \$7
Rich's • 2401 San Jacinto
713-759-9606

SATURDAY, JUNE 29**2002 Houston Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Pride Parade**

Experience the fun and excitement thousands anticipate from America's original nighttime Pride Parade and the Southwest's largest GLBT event, along with new announcers' stages, new lighting and other surprises. Participants are encouraged to come early for music and interactive vendor displays.



Pride-goers will be entertained Friday night by a few girls with guitars at the GoGirlsRock! concert at the Rhythm Room. (Photo by Kimberly Thompson)



Rainbow colors and togetherness (above) will abound for gays during the last weekend of Pride 2002. (Photo by Dalton Dehart) Tens of thousands of people are expected to flood Montrose on Saturday night for Houston's famous nighttime gay Pride parade (right). (Photo by Kimberly Thompson)

8:45-11 p.m.
Westheimer, Woodhead to Whitney
713-529-6979
web: www.pridehouston.org

"It's a Small World After All"
The Official Pride Worldwide Party

After the Parade, dance down to Rich's and party with pride into the wee hours. A carnival setting complete with rides and games is planned. Chart-topping dance songstress (and Carol Burnett's daughter!) Erin Hamilton performs on the main stage following her appearance on the Rich's float in the parade. Proceeds benefit Houston Pride.

10 p.m.-4 a.m.
Rich's • 2401 San Jacinto
713-759-9606



Weekend Pride entertainment includes plenty of parties for gay Houstonians both before and after the annual parade. (Photo by Dalton Dehart)

"Pride American Style"

The Official After-hours Pride Party

Spy Nightclub hosts the Official After-hours Pride Party: "Pride.02 American Style." Immediately after the official post-parade party at Rich's, join the Spoiled Boyz for a dance party and light show featuring DJ Dawn Montel of Bump (SF, LA) and Red Eye (LA) fame, as well as a surprise performance. A portion of the proceeds benefits Pride Committee of Houston.

3:30-8 a.m. • Cost: \$15
Spy Nightclub • 112 Travis
713-521-2910 (voice mail)
www.spoiledparties.com

**Pride Recovery Party**

Dancing and drink specials help gay Houstonians ease out of a fabulous Pride weekend. Trophies for the parade award winners will be presented at 6 p.m. on the main stage. Proceeds benefit Houston Pride.

4-10 p.m. • Cost: \$2
Rich's • 2401 San Jacinto
713-759-9606

PRIDE INFO

Pride Committee of Houston
P.O. Box 66071
Houston, TX 77266-6071

PrideLine: 713-529-6979
www.pridehouston.org
E-mail: info@pridehouston.org

Parents, Families, Gays (PFLAG) orary grand Houston Pride

Not so long ago, they had no room for their son, Paul, and was moving.

"He told us his son, who was 16, was not surprised by the past. It was my

"Surprised to explain Jane's reaction when she received a

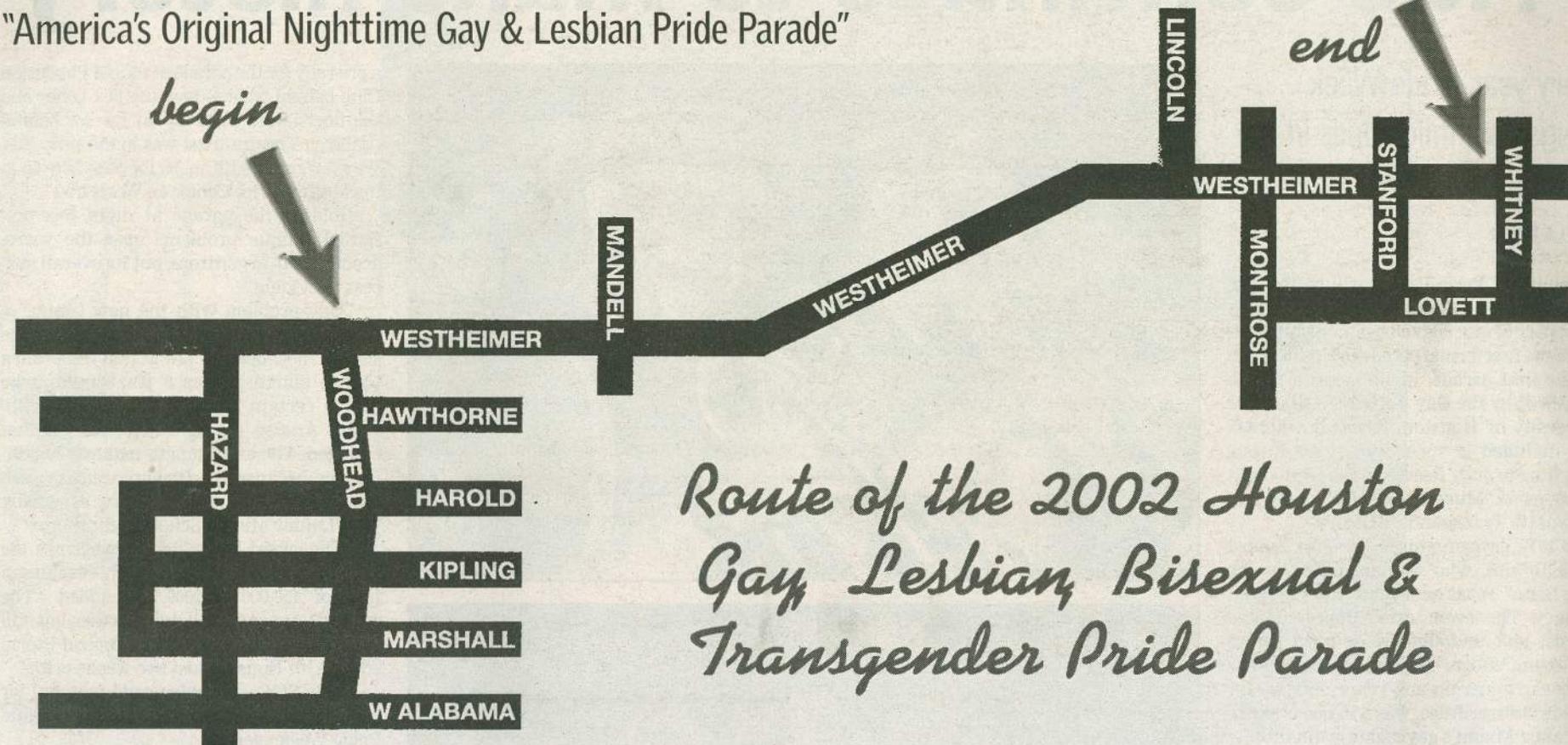
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houston pride 2002

2002 Houston Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Pride Parade

"America's Original Nighttime Gay & Lesbian Pride Parade"



*Route of the 2002 Houston
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual &
Transgender Pride Parade*

• **STARTS:** 8:45 p.m. Saturday, June 29 • **WHERE:** On Westheimer, from Woodhead to Whitney • **SPECIAL:** Bleacher seating available near Montrose & Westheimer. Contact the Pride Committee of Houston for details. • 713-529-6979 www.pridehouston.org



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Pride continues to make history

Every year, Pride Week brings new milestones in the battle for gay civil rights

By ELLA TYLER

Saturday's Pride Parade will be the 24th annual event of its kind, but public gatherings in support of gay rights began several years before the first formal parade in Houston.

The first parade, in 1976, was a march sponsored by the Gay Activists Alliance at University of Houston. It was downtown, and included a speech by Vito Russo, according to Judy Reeves of the Gulf Coast Archives & Museum of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender History.

In 1977, gays organized a protest against Anita Bryant, who was appearing at the State Bar of Texas's convention at the Hyatt Regency. The event drew unprecedented crowds, and undoubtedly spurred future organizing efforts. Bryant, a former Miss America runner-up and representative for Florida Orange Juice, was a major organizer against Miami's gay rights ordinance.

The first Pride Week was June 16-25, 1978. It began on Friday with a prayer vigil held at the Houston Public Library plaza, in memory of the Bryant rally held there a year before, Reeves said. A week of lectures, projects and parties followed. Town Meeting I, a community-wide planning meeting on June 25 at the Astroarena, closed out the week.

Use of the Astroarena for a gay function was controversial. The GCAM archives include a copy of a transcript of a Harris County Commissioners' Court meeting of May 25, 1978, at which a Dr. Wallings, then chairman of the Community Standards Coalition of Houston, protested the event's



Houston's Pride traditionally offers up all kinds of entertainment (top), from music and dancing to arts and more. (Photo by Kimberly Thompson) This weekend's crowd of spectators and participants for the annual Houston Pride Parade (above) is the latest in a long tradition of gatherings supporting gay rights in this city. Mary's...Naturally is a popular spot for parade watchers each year. (Photo by Dalton Dehart)

mayor had ridden in the parade until 2000. saying we should make it a nighttime parade.

a pre-rally for the parade at the old Plantation Club behind what is now the Fox Diner and the floats were lined up in the lot behind Alabama Theatre. That was in the early '80s. We even reversed it in '90 for Star Nite 90 at the Multi-Service Center on West Gray."

Holding the parade at night has presented unique problems over the years, according to organizers, but its overall success is evident.

"One problem with the new timing of the parade was that the route had to be shorter, because city law at that time said a parade starting after 8 p.m. couldn't be over a certain length," Christensen said. "With Annise Parker's help, we got that changed. The extra length makes a big difference because the line-up area is much better with a Woodhead start, especially with Lanier Middle School right there."

"The crowd has gotten bigger since the first nighttime parade in 1997, reaching a high of 150,000 in 2000," he added. "The crowd last year was slightly smaller, but still very impressive given that Tropical Storm Allison hit Houston just two weeks prior."

Dalia Stokes, female grand marshal for 2001, praised organizers of the annual Pride Week events.

"What a fabulous job the volunteers with the Pride Committee of Houston do in putting on this extravaganza that is so welcoming and so inclusive," Stokes said. "My entire family — partner of 25 years, 86-year-old mother, 29-year-old daughter, and 2-year-old granddaughter — participated in the parade and found it to be an enriching experience all the way around."

Stokes added, "[Gay Houston attorney] Mitchell Katine and I are graduates of the South Texas College of Law. The Alumni Fall quarterly magazine featured a large photo of Mitchell and myself as the male and female grand marshals of the 2001 Gay

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By KAY Y. DAY

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In 1977, gays organized a protest against Anita Bryant, who was appearing at the State Bar of Texas' convention at the Hyatt Regency. The event drew unprecedented crowds, and undoubtedly spurred future organizing efforts. Bryant, a former Miss America runner-up and representative for Florida Orange Juice, was a major organizer against Miami's gay rights ordinance.

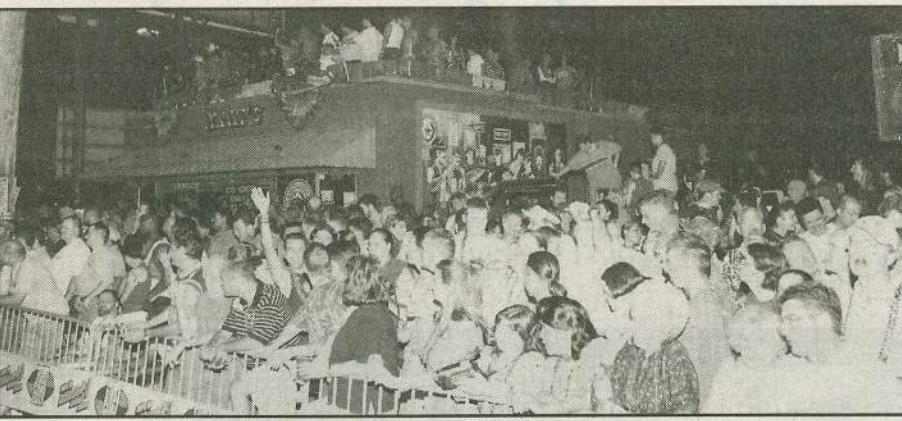
The first Pride Week was June 16-25, 1978. It began on Friday with a prayer vigil held at the Houston Public Library plaza, in memory of the Bryant rally held there a year before, Reeves said. A week of lectures, projects and parties followed. Town Meeting I, a community-wide planning meeting on June 25 at the Astroarena, closed out the week.

Use of the Astroarena for a gay function was controversial. The GCAM archives include a copy of a transcript of a Harris County Commissioners' Court meeting of May 25, 1978, at which a Dr. Wallings, then chairman of the Community Standards Coalition of Houston, protested the event's taking place on county property. However, since the Houston Sports Authority had the exclusive rights to lease the property, Commissioners' Court decided it could not prevent the rental, although it wanted to officially go on record saying its members disapproved, Reeves said.

The first official Pride Parade was held in 1979, according to Troy Christensen, communications director for the current Pride Committee of Houston. The first Houston Pride marshal was a heterosexual woman, Thelma Hansel, a.k.a. Disco Grandma, according to activist Brandon Wolf, who has compiled a list of parade marshals. The next year, both a male and a female grand marshal were chosen.

In 1988, a position for an honorary grand marshal was created, and in 1993, a marshal spot was added for an organization, Wolf said. Marshals are now chosen by a vote, which is open to all gay Houstonians, from a list of nominees chosen by the Pride Committee.

Various politicians have had entries in the Parade, and state Rep. Debra Danburg, Congressman Craig Washington and Constable Jack Abercia have been honorary grand marshals, but no Houston



Houston's Pride traditionally offers up all kinds of entertainment (top), from music and dancing to arts and more. (Photo by Kimberly Thompson) This weekend's crowd of spectators and participants for the annual Houston Pride Parade (above) is the latest in a long tradition of gatherings supporting gay rights in this city. Mary's...Naturally is a popular spot for parade watchers each year. (Photo by Dalton Dehart)

mayor had ridden in the parade until 2000. That year, Mayor Lee Brown made history as the first person holding that office to participate in the event.

Sue Null, a member of PFLAG (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays), which was the organizational grand marshal in 1993 and 2001, says, "When I learned my daughter was a lesbian about 14 years ago, she mentioned PFLAG to me. I said, 'No, I don't need that; I'm okay with you...but there's no way I'm going to march in a parade.'

"Several years later, I attended PFLAG to find support for a young gay man just coming out," Null adds. "Four months after that, he and I were marching in the Pride Parade, and the next year, my husband joined me. Since then, we have marched in most of the parades."

Until 1997, the Pride Parade was held in the afternoon of the final Sunday in June, but by the early '90s the timing was creating problems.

"The parade was dying," Jack Valinski, former executive director of the Pride Committee, said in an interview with the Houston Voice last year. "People were sick and it became harder and harder to get a crowd out in the heat. We were talking about moving it to another month, but Lee Harrington kept

saying we should make it a nighttime parade.

"It finally came down to one vote, and I voted in favor of the nighttime parade, but I was worried," Valinski said. "We didn't even know if the city would let us do it like this, and there were security issues, but it has been wonderful."

To Jimmy Carper, who was a grand marshal for the first night parade in 1997, every parade is wonderful.

"I saw my first Pride Parade in 1986 and was completely overwhelmed. I saw a vibrant and very alive community that I wanted to be a part of," he said. "In 1988, I was in the parade for the first time. I couldn't believe the feeling of walking down the middle of Westheimer in Montrose with hundreds of people on either side cheering.

"I had never felt such a feeling of 'belonging' ever before," Carper added. "That feeling has been repeated each year that I've marched in the parade, and never to a lesser degree than that first time. Since 1988, I've only missed one Parade; that year I watched from the sidelines. I'll march in every future one!"

Before 1997, the parade route varied some from year to year, according to Brian Keever, a 20-year veteran of Pride Parades.

"I remember when we started at Shepherd and Westheimer, years ago," he said. "We had

to change because the line-up area is much better with a Woodhead start, especially with Lanier Middle School right there.

"The crowd has gotten bigger since the first nighttime parade in 1997, reaching a high of 150,000 in 2000," he added. "The crowd last year was slightly smaller, but still very impressive given that Tropical Storm Allison hit Houston just two weeks prior."

Dalia Stokes, female grand marshal for 2001, praised organizers of the annual Pride Week events.

"What a fabulous job the volunteers with the Pride Committee of Houston do in putting on this extravaganza that is so welcoming and so inclusive," Stokes said. "My entire family — partner of 25 years, 86-year-old mother, 29-year-old daughter, and 2-year-old granddaughter — participated in the parade and found it to be an enriching experience all the way around."

Stokes added, "[Gay Houston attorney] Mitchell Katine and I are graduates of the South Texas College of Law. The Alumni Fall quarterly magazine featured a large photo of Mitchell and myself as the male and female grand marshals of the 2001 Gay & Lesbian Pride Parade. Surely that was a memorable first."

So far, even the weather has been cooperative for Pride in Houston.

"It rains nearly every year sometime during parade day, but it never really rains on the parade itself," Christensen said. "I remember one year it rained right before the parade, but stopped before 8:45 p.m., and one year it rained just as the parade was ending."

The parade is managed by Pride Committee of Houston, a non-profit corporation.



Members of PFLAG (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays) participate in Pride Week activities each year. (Photo by Dalton Dehart)

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Houston Pride Parade 2002 Grand Marshals

Female Grand Marshal: Herlinda 'Mela' Contreras

Mela knows your name

Longtime bar owner, activist honored by chance to serve as female grand marshal

By KAY Y. DAYUS

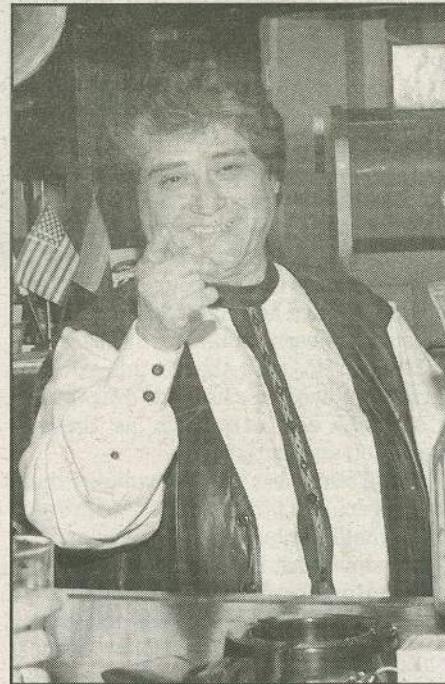
Herlinda "Mela" Contreras, better known simply as Mela, bar owner extraordinaire for the past 20 years, is this year's female Pride grand marshal and she's "very happy and honored and looking forward to the parade."

Not overtly known for her contributions to the GBLT community in Houston, she nevertheless is known by many as a tireless "behind-the-scenes" worker who has strived over the years to help the community.

She has held many fund-raisers, barbecues, voter registration drives, holy union ceremonies and receptions for the mostly Hispanic members of the gay community.

Contreras is Houston born and bred, one of 15 children.

"I think I was number eight. It's hard to



Mela Contreras looks forward to the 2002 Houston Pride Parade and serving as female grand marshal, plus hosting a post-parade party at her business. (Photo by Kimberly Thompson)

remember with so many," she says. "My mom also raised two of her sister's children. So it was 17 really."

They all grew up in Clayton Homes, a public housing complex in Houston's



Second Ward. It was at a young age that Contreras felt she stood out from the crowd.

"When I was 6 years old, I knew I was different," she says, referring to being a lesbian. "My mum knew too, but never talked about it."

"My family doesn't like it simply because they don't understand," Contreras adds. "But they accept it because I'm family."

Contreras has owned a bar for more than 20 years. Her first, One on One, was on West Gray. She later had a bar on Fairview where Bricks is now located. "It was a regular building and I had it converted to a bar," she recalls.

Next, she moved to 19th Street and Shepherd, where she opened her first Mela's Bar.

Later, she closed that one and, a few years ago, opened Mela's Tejano Bar on Fairview near Bagby Street. That's where she and her partner, Eileen Ledgerwood, can be found most of the time nowadays.

And although it is mainly a Tejano bar, she says everyone is welcome and they play all kinds of music. She plays host to gays, lesbians and heterosexuals, Hispanic and otherwise.

At one time, she wanted a strictly lesbian bar, but it never paid off.

"Mainly women don't go out as much as men — only on the weekends usually — so now Mela's is an every person's bar," Contreras says, and she adds that she likes it that way.

Owning and operating a bar is hard work, Contreras admits. But she says she'll continue to do it.

"I guess it's in my blood, but it gets harder and harder," she relates.

Contreras also is a trained dental technician and, for a change in pace, she occasionally goes to help in her sister's dental clinic and laboratory in the Heights.

But then it's back to Mela's, where she enjoys her customers, who, she says, seem to find her wherever she moves to. She wants to remind all those customers and any new ones that she is having a big after-parade party with hot dogs and more.

"So they can sober up a bit and keep 'em in line," she says with a laugh.

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on another
wonderful



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Houston Pride Parade 2002 Grand Marshals

Male Grand Marshal: Rusty Mueller, a.k.a. Crystal Rae Lee Love

The two faces of one grand marshal

Rusty Mueller, a.k.a. Crystal Rae

Lee Love, rides in this year's parade as the male grand marshal

By KAY Y. DAYUS and PENNY WEAVER

In or out of drag, this year's Pride Parade male grand marshal is well known to gay Houstonians.

So it probably doesn't matter if Rusty Mueller appears in Saturday's parade as Crystal Rae Lee Love — gays packing the streets of Montrose will recognize him all the same.

Mueller frequently performs as his female alter ego, the blonde bombshell who struts her stuff as a drag artist for the RSICSS, a.k.a. the Royal, Sovereign & Imperial Court of the Single Star of Houston, or "The Court."

With that kind of name, it's no surprise that this group is often seen as having an air of mystery, but Mueller says The Court is simply a fun organization.

"There's nothing secretive. Some people think you have to be invited into The Court; it's not true," he says. "We embrace anybody who wants to play our game, and



This year's Houston Pride Parade male grand marshal is **Rusty Mueller**, perhaps just as well or better known as **Crystal Rae Lee Love**. (Photos by Kimberly Thompson)

The Court is one big game."

Mueller notes that Court membership is open to anyone, not just gay men.

"We also have lesbians and transgenders, and this year we even have a married heterosexual couple in The Court," he says.

Court members are, by and large, flamboyant fun-lovers. They do strive to impress with titles like "Empress" and "Emperor," or "Prince" and "Princess," accompanied by plenty of pomp and circumstance.

"The men wear white gloves and we bow and curtsey. We really think we're

emperors and empresses, but when we wake up in the morning, we know we're not," Mueller says with a laugh.

As Crystal, Mueller was elected empress several years ago and was regaled for a year as royalty in The Court. More recently, he was elected to serve on the International Court Council of the 35-year-old organization.

As a matter of fact, this just-for-fun group has a seriously wide membership. There are more than 65 courts throughout Canada, Mexico and the U.S. The Court in Houston has been around for 18 years.

Mueller, 45, says that in his younger days, he enjoyed watching the drag queens at the old gay bars such as the Old Plantation and Outlaw Bar.

"I still remember the first names of those drag queens and I just knew when I grew up that's what I wanted to be," he recalls.

He admits that he got into drag about 15 years ago to make some money for himself, not for charity. At least, that's what he thought.

"I was neither the prettiest nor the most talented to earn a living that way," Mueller says with a self-deprecating laugh.

So to preserve his drag career, he turned to The Court.

"Now I don't have to be the prettiest. I can still make a lot of money if I have to, but for others, not myself," Mueller says.

It is quite a transformation for this quiet, thoughtful, soft-spoken man to become the lively Crystal. But once he puts on the dress, makeup, blonde wig and

three-inch heels, his personality changes.

"As Crystal, I'm more outgoing. Rusty is shyer. At least that's how it was in the beginning. Now, through Crystal, I am more outgoing as Rusty. But I am Rusty, a man who puts on a dress to make money," Mueller explains.

Mueller's "real job" is in the admittedly routine world of insurance. He is now single, but his dating history includes two long-term relationships, and he notes that he is still friends with both of his former partners.

Mueller's other fund-raising activities have been with the Colt 45's and the now-defunct Soiree Aubergine.

It's hard to tell just which part of Mueller — the reserved Rusty or the in-your-face Crystal — is most excited about the parade.

"This is the first time a drag artist who has been chosen grand marshal has been given the option to be either persona in the parade," Mueller notes. "Before, they had to go as a man. It was gender specific."

Gay Houstonians will have to wait for Saturday night to see either Rusty or Crystal parading on Westheimer. But either way, Mueller is sure to continue his in-drag escapades, at least as long as he can still get his feet in those three-inch heels.

"My feet hurt like hell when I'm in them," he admits. "I'll never get tired of The Court, but there will come a time when Crystal will have to retire and take a back seat."

He smiles.

"We're not ready yet. I am the empress who won't step down."

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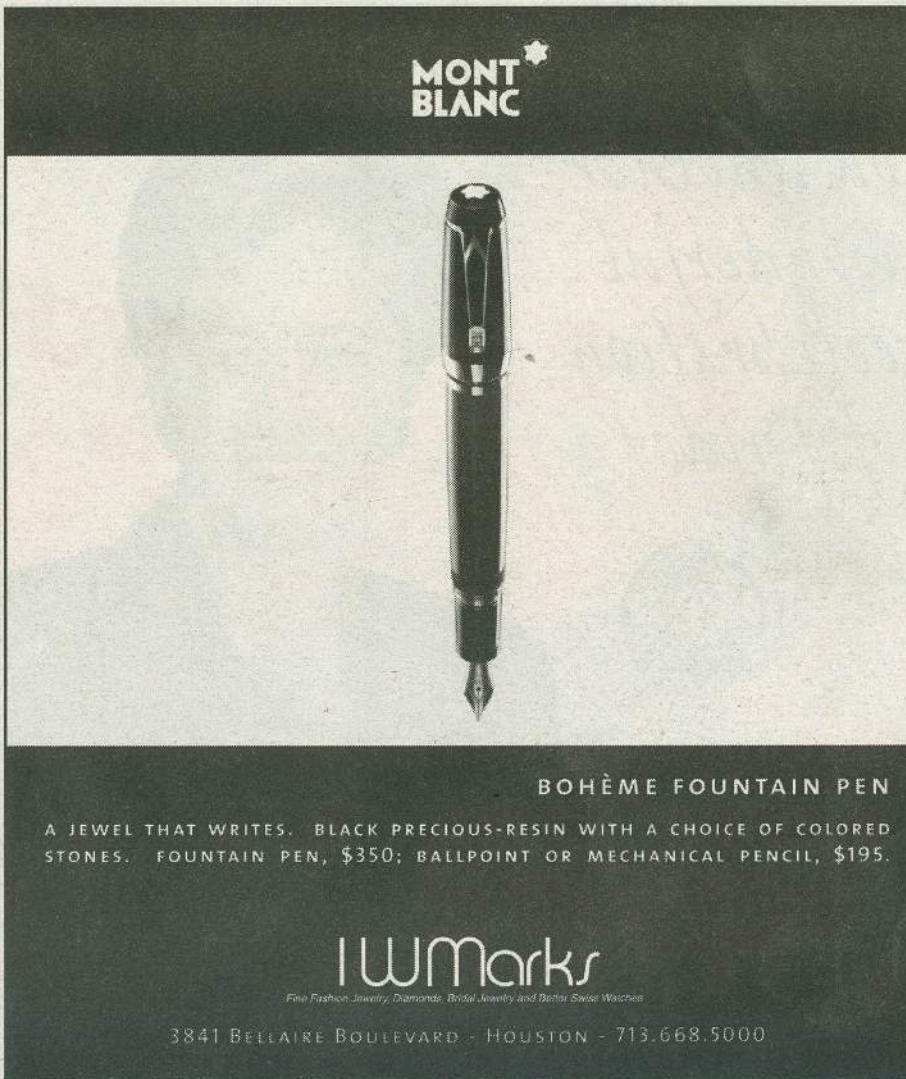
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Houston Pride Parade 2002 Grand Marshals

Honorary Grand Marshals Irv and Jane Smith

Smiths become Pride parents

Couple makes journey from not knowing their son was gay to being active in PFLAG, other groups

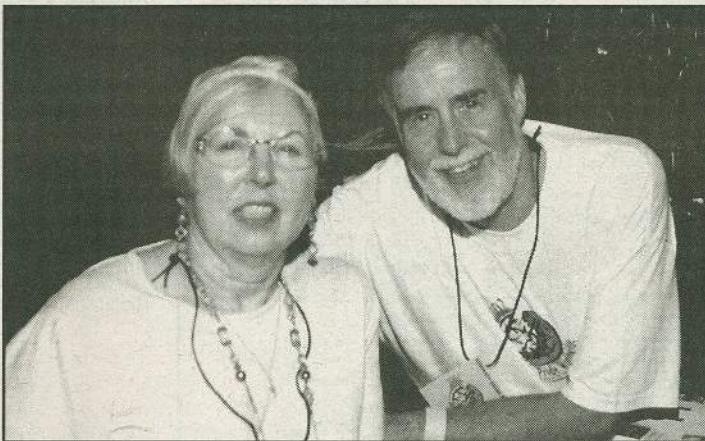
By KAY Y. DAYUS

In the last 10 years, Irv and Jane Smith have come a long way. They have gone from knowing nothing whatsoever about gay people to becoming ardent members of Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG) and now to serving as honorary grand marshals in this year's Houston Pride Parade.

Not so long ago, they knew nothing of gay life, nor did they want to. They thought they had no reason to know. That was until their son, Paul, revealed that he was gay and was moving in with his partner.

"He told us in a letter," says Irv Smith of his son, who was living in Austin. "Somehow I was not surprised. I had my suspicions in the past. It was my wife who was more surprised."

"Surprised," was not quite the word to explain Jane Smith's reaction to the news she received a decade ago, she recalls. "I



PFLAG parents **Irv** and **Jane Smith** are this year's honorary grand marshals. (Photo by Dalton Dehart)

was absolutely broken-hearted. I was convinced it must be something environmental — something I had done," she says.

She thought her son would die of AIDS, lose his job, or be the victim of a hate crime. "It was at the time when Paul Broussard had been killed and I imagined it would happen to my son," she admits. Broussard, a Houston attorney, was attacked and murdered after coming out of a gay bar in 1991.

The Smiths traveled from Houston to Austin to see their son and told him that although they didn't understand his orientation, he was their son and they loved him.

They also found out that their daughter Amy, four years younger than her brother and straight, had known for some time. "She had no problem with it — she adores

her brother. And in fact, she would never date a man who was not supportive of her brother," Jane explains.

Both parents thought they would not have to deal with Paul's partner, Gary, but that was not what they expected either. "He became a very important part of our lives," says Irv. Gary's parents did not accept his sexuality, and the Smiths became his surrogate family. Sadly, Gary died three years ago of AIDS-related pneumonia.

After learning of their son's homosexuality, the Smiths searched for understanding, and about six months later they found PFLAG. They say that began their journey from despair and shame — they were afraid to tell family and friends — to enlightenment: a new awareness of the

plight that gays face as they struggle to be accepted by the straight world.

"We went in the closet. I am retired now, but at the time was a petroleum engineer — a very macho job. We didn't tell anybody," says Irv.

"We joined PFLAG in 1992," says Jane. "I went to the national convention the next year. My husband was not ready for that and my daughter went with me."

But Irv did "come out" to his elderly parents, both in their 90s. He says his father, an ex-attorney, is 97, and "as sharp as a tack," and even uses e-mail, an unusual hobby for his generation.

"He said he was proud of us," Irv explains. His mother is not so alert, he says, and he is not sure that she understands.

In addition to working with PFLAG, Jane has been on the board for the Gay Men's Chorus of Houston for a year and is having a great time.

"Every time they perform, we get four tickets and take two of our straight friends — a different couple each time — to expose them to gay people. Their reaction is always positive," she says happily.

The couple never thought they'd be in the gay Pride Parade, but by now they have walked several times with PFLAG. "It is a great feeling to see how the crowds react to PFLAG," says Jane.

Now, both look forward to riding in the parade as grand marshals, with their son by their side.



Congratulations to Pride on 24 years of great parades! Let's light up Houston!

Thank you, Houston!

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Houston Pride Parade 2002 Grand Marshals

Honorary Grand Marshal Organization: Gay & Lesbian Switchboard Houston

Who ya gonna call?

Volunteers are on the line at the Gay & Lesbian Switchboard Houston

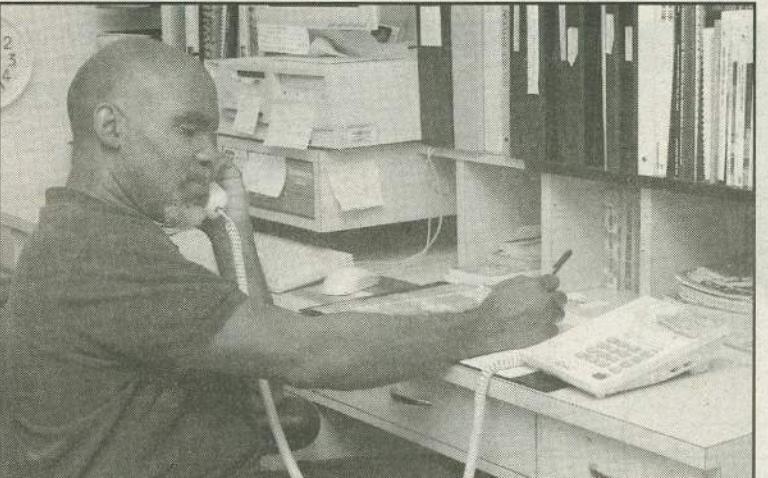
By KAY Y. DAYUS

"For 20 years we've been answering calls with no hang-ups," says the mission statement of Houston's Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, named the organization grand marshal for this year's Pride parade.

And as the group's members celebrate 20 years of service to gay Houstonians, they are busy making — what else? — a telephone as their entry in the parade.

"A huge, shiny green and pink telephone," explains Sally Huffer, development and marketing manager with Montrose Counseling Center. Huffer says the switchboard's first entry in the parade 20 years ago was also a huge telephone.

And they are not missing an opportunity to make themselves known to anyone in the crowd who needs their services, she says. They'll be riding through the parade and tossing out magnets shaped as telephones with the switchboard's number on them.



Switchboard manager Steven Jerome is among those who are just a phone call away from gay Houstonians in need of information and help. (Photo by Kimberly Thompson)

The switchboard became part of MCC more than a year ago but has kept its office located in the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 803 Hawthorne, where volunteers can be found working the phones every day between 6 p.m. and midnight.

After midnight, an answering service takes all calls and takes messages unless the caller is in some kind of crisis. In those cases, the calls are referred for help right away.

So far this year, the switchboard has handled more than 900 calls with the aid of about 15 active volunteers. The group has new volunteers all the time, according to Huffer.

Prospective volunteers have 20 to 40 hours of training, she notes.

"It's very intensive, including crisis intervention and role playing, and we ask for a one-year commitment from volunteers after training," says Huffer.

The switchboard has only one paid employee: a part-time manager of the volunteers, Steven Jerome.

In the beginning, the switchboard was called the Gay Switchboard and focused on gay men and HIV, but by 1985 expanded its current title and work with lesbians.

The majority of calls are "out-of-towners," wanting to know, for example, where to find gay bars, where to find a gay realtor, or other businesses that are gay friendly, Huffer says.

"We also get calls from people who are

just coming out and transgenders who are looking for organizations they can call. They feel so isolated and alone," she adds.

They also get calls from parents whose children have come out to them. "The No. 1 referral [we give] is PFLAG," Huffer notes.

Other calls relate to domestic violence and hate crimes against gays and lesbians, and sometimes even suicide.

"I know our volunteers stopped at least one person from committing suicide. Of course, we don't know what happened later," says Huffer.

Recently, the switchboard spread its message over several billboards located inside the 610 Loop, thanks to the generosity of Clear Channel Outdoor. The huge green and pink boards — the switchboard's colors — clearly show the name, number and Web site of the organization.

Leaders of the group had hopes that the signs would capture the attention of some gays, lesbians and transgenders who are in need of a helping hand. So far, the plan has worked: as the billboards have gone up, so has the volume of calls increased, Huffer notes.

And people need not be afraid to call. One of the advantages of the switchboard, says Huffer, is the "complete anonymity. We don't have caller ID. It's a first good step."

INFO

Gay & Lesbian Switchboard Houston
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www.gayswitchboardHouston.org

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Bulk up without breaking the bank
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By ELLA TYLER

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20 years of service to gay Houstonians, they are busy making — what else? — a telephone as their entry in the parade.

"A huge, shiny green and pink telephone," explains Sally Huffer, development and marketing manager with Montrose Counseling Center. Huffer says the switchboard's first entry in the parade 20 years ago was also a huge telephone.

And they are not missing an opportunity to make themselves known to anyone in the crowd who needs their services, she says. They'll be riding through the parade and tossing out magnets shaped as telephones with the switchboard's number on them.

more than a year ago but has kept its office located in the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 803 Hawthorne, where volunteers can be found working the phones every day between 6 p.m. and midnight.

After midnight, an answering service takes all calls and takes messages unless the caller is in some kind of crisis. In those cases, the calls are referred for help right away.

So far this year, the switchboard has handled more than 900 calls with the aid of about 15 active volunteers. The group has new volunteers all the time, according to Huffer.

Prospective volunteers have 20 to 40 hours of training, she notes.

intervention and role playing, and we ask for a one-year commitment from volunteers after training," says Huffer.

The switchboard has only one paid employee: a part-time manager of the volunteers, Steven Jerome.

In the beginning, the switchboard was called the Gay Switchboard and focused on gay men and HIV, but by 1985 expanded its current title and work with lesbians.

The majority of calls are "out-of-towners," wanting to know, for example, where to find gay bars, where to find a gay realtor, or other businesses that are gay friendly, Huffer says.

"We also get calls from people who are

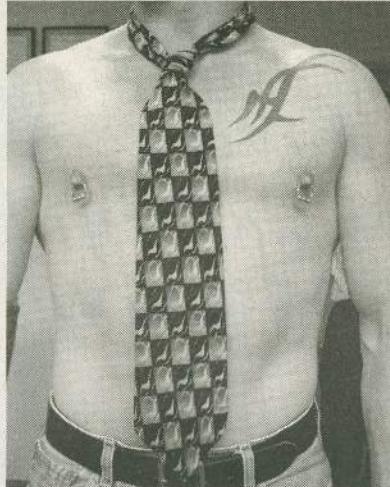
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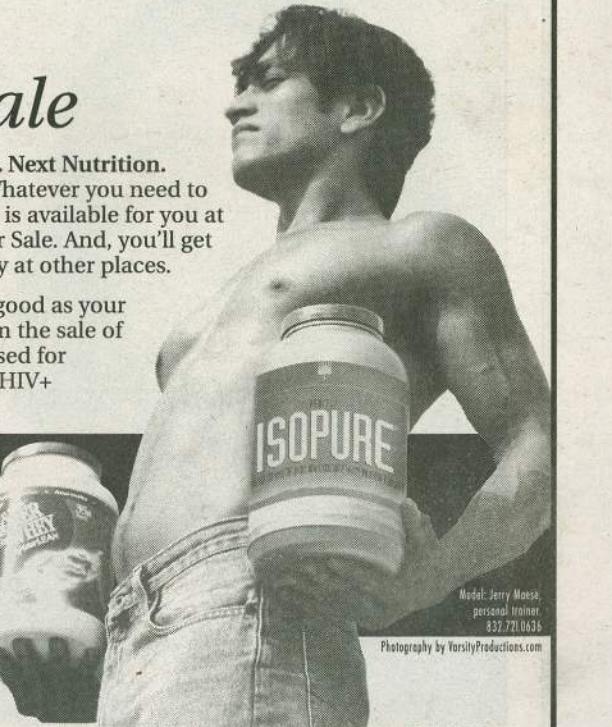
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HOMEFRONT: A flower or a weed? Let the individual decide. **Page 24**

OUT ON THE AISLE: Find shelter from the heat with the "Summer Chills" series at the Alley Theater this summer. **Page 23**

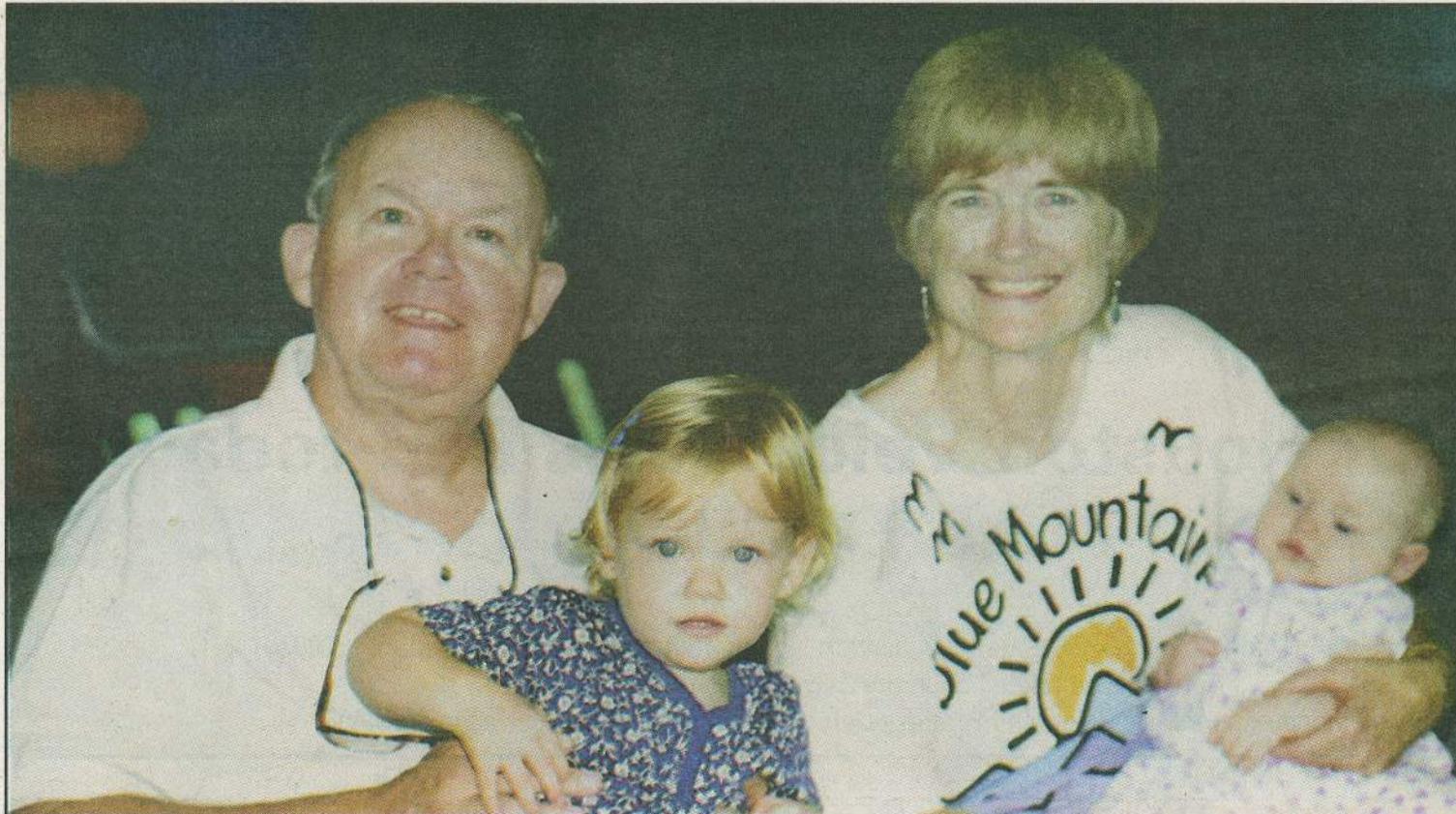


HOUSTON VOICE

JUNE 28, 2002

PAGE 17

Out on the Bayou



Parents Jim and Sue Null never pass up a moment to be advocates for gay civil rights

Houstonians Jim and Sue Null, shown here with two of their grandchildren, have been active for nearly a decade in the fight for equal rights for gays.

'Our way of giving back'



advocates for gay civil rights

Houstonians Jim and Sue Null, shown here with two of their grandchildren, have been active for nearly a decade in the fight for equal rights for gays.

'Our way of giving back'

By KAY Y. DAYUS

THE NULLS — SUE AND JIM — HAVE two ordinary names for two extraordinary people who have, for the past eight or so years, championed gay rights through the aid of Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays, simply known as PFLAG.

The couple are a shining example of supportive parents of gays, along with fellow PFLAG parents Irv and Jane Smith, who will serve as grand marshals in the Houston Pride Parade 2002.

Both the Nulls and the Smiths have made the journey from knowing little about gay life to becoming champions for gay civil rights.

In the early '90s, the Nulls knew nothing about gays, lesbians or transgendered — they had no reason to know. They were happy and content with their lot and their three grown daughters. And although they did volunteer work with the Center for Healing & Racism through their church, they could hardly have been labeled activists.

That was, until two things happened to change their quiet lives. The first was the

accidental discovery that their middle daughter, Kathie, is a lesbian. The second came shortly after the arrival of a newcomer in their home.

A soft-spoken but animated Sue relates the surprise of finding out about their daughter.

"She was home from college and brought a girlfriend to dinner. For some reason during dinner I got up from the table and saw my daughter holding hands with her girlfriend under the tablecloth. I thought, 'This isn't usual.' But no one said anything."

She later told her husband, then confronted her daughter when she was back at college. Kathie confirmed their suspicions.

"My first thought was that she was just experimenting and then I thought, 'Oh God, what did I do to cause this?'" Sue recalls.

Although these were first reactions, the discovery did not throw them for long. Neither had negative views about gays or lesbians. They just never thought about



the issue, but they were aware that the minister at their church, the First Unitarian Universalist Church, was gay. They both thoroughly liked him.

"It was a non-issue to us. It was nothing scary or strange — we had no religious qualms about gays," says Jim.

Thinking they might need help, their daughter suggested they contact PFLAG for help in adjusting to having a lesbian daughter. But the Nulls were cool — they didn't need help.

"I was certainly not going to march in the street, and we didn't seek support and that was the end of it," says an adamant Sue.

LIFE WENT ON AS USUAL FOR THE Nulls. Sue continued to teach at Rice University. Jim was kept busy with his own computer graphics company. Then about seven years ago, they began to feel the "empty nest" syndrome. They were alone at home. It was too quiet. One

daughter married and moved to France. Another moved to South Carolina and, after college, Kathie moved to Missouri.

"I taught foreign students and we thought it would be nice to have a congenial person come to live with us," says Sue. She taught a "nice Asian young man" who they got to know and whose family lived in Asia. They asked him if he'd like to share their home, and he's been living with them since.

The Nulls refer to this young man as their "son." "He's a child of my heart, if not of my body," says a proud Sue.

This young man, not their daughter Kathie, turned out to be the driving force to get them to PFLAG. Coincidentally, this young man is gay and came out to the Nulls. She says he prefers not to use his name in the newspaper as he is not "out" to his family.

Because of his ethnicity, he was very distressed to discover his own homosexuality, and the Nulls were not sure how to deal with his unhappiness. They finally

Please see **GIVING BACK**, on Page 19

out on the bayou

Nulls unflagging in support of gay rights

GIVING BACK, continued from Page 17

turned to PFLAG for that help.

And so began the Nulls' road to activism — a road that seemingly has no end for this middle-aged couple. They are dedicated to erasing "the injustice committed against the ideals of gay rights." Wherever the Nulls go, they "talk up" their message to anyone who will listen.

They wear PFLAG T-shirts to conferences and people come up to them in airports, hotels and anywhere else they may happen to be to express gratitude for what they're doing. "At the March on Washington two years ago, people would come up and shake our hands when they saw our red PFLAG shirts," Sue says.

Jim thinks it's easier for the parents of gays and lesbians to carry the message of equality. "We are more accepted as parents and we can get away with a hell of a lot more than gays. And we'll continue to ride that horse," he says.

Although Sue says she is basically shy, she appears not to be when she's talking about PFLAG or anything else she cares about. It's her husband who seems to be the quiet, reserved one. And yet he's very much at home in front of Houston City Council when arguing gay rights or before the HISD School Board as he prepares this week to argue for inclusion of "sexual identity" in their policies.

He does most of the graphics for the local chapter of PFLAG, which has more than 250 members, writes grants and does just about anything else he can. He says he is kind of winding down his business and easing into retirement, so he has the time.

Sue continues to talk up PFLAG and gay rights. So much so that when she was on the plane returning from the March on Washington, she noticed Republican Sen. Phil Gramm was on the same flight that was occupied mostly by gays.

"I let no teaching opportunity go by. I create them," Sue says, and, true to her words, she approached Gramm to inform him of the plight of gays and lesbians. "He had to listen to me and I had to go and talk to him. I wanted to put a face on it. I wanted him to know that people who disagree are ordinary people. We need to let them know."

Another of her "teaching moments" led to PFLAG's entry in this year's Pride parade. The couple was in Austin attending a rally when she met a young man from Santa Fe, Texas, a conservative town south of Houston. He told her he was gay and he wanted to help his parents understand. She told him to get his folks to PFLAG.

They did and the young man's mother immediately got involved, but his father was having a difficult time finding his niche in the organization. That was until the group wanted to build a float to signify what PFLAG means to the community.

It turned out his father was a wood-worker and he and his son built the house for this year's float. "It was a project that brought father and son together doing something like they'd done when their son was younger," Sue explains. "It's a wonderful float and wonderful that his father found his spot in PFLAG."

OVER THE YEARS, THE NULLS' enthusiasm has not waned — in fact, it seems to grow stronger. But it has not always easy, especially when a person is shy like Sue. She gives an example of a Christmas party the two attended.

"We were the only straight couple out of about 300 people. I felt uncomfortable — like a fish out of water." She hastily adds that the discomfort was of their own making, not the people at the party. "It's all in my head, not how people see me. I'm shy. I have to push myself."

But nowadays, she feels comfortable walking into Lobo and walking into other gay places as a representative of PFLAG.

The Nulls walked in their first Pride parade in 1995 and liked it. "We were marching with PFLAG and our daughter, Kathie, was on the sidewalk watching. I think she's proud of us," Sue relates.

Both love the reaction from the crowd when they see PFLAG's float approaching. It's especially great when they come

around the curve on Westheimer where the biggest crowds appear. "There's such a huge hullabaloo when they see PFLAG," says Jim.

They've been in every Pride parade since, but will miss this year's because of a prior commitment. They wish they could be there this Saturday.

But one can be sure the Nulls will be talking up PFLAG at their engagement this weekend as they always do. They say they'll never let a chance to educate people go by, not as long as "the religious right continues to protest against gays. There are so many causes they could devote their time to," instead of harassing gays and lesbians, Sue says.

The Nulls can no longer imagine a life without activism for equal rights and, anyway, they are having an "absolutely fabulous time," says Sue. "We've met so many wonderful people — heard so many stories of kids coming out to their parents and being rejected by them. They won't even answer their telephone calls. It's devastating."

"It's been an eye opener and heart warming," Jim says. "We see no end to our involvement with PFLAG."

Both say they've "grown in sensitivity, grown in compassion," and grown in their understanding of the world. And they won't quit.

"It's our way of giving back," says Sue.

**Someone is about to realize that it's now...or never.
Don't miss the extraordinary Season Finale.**



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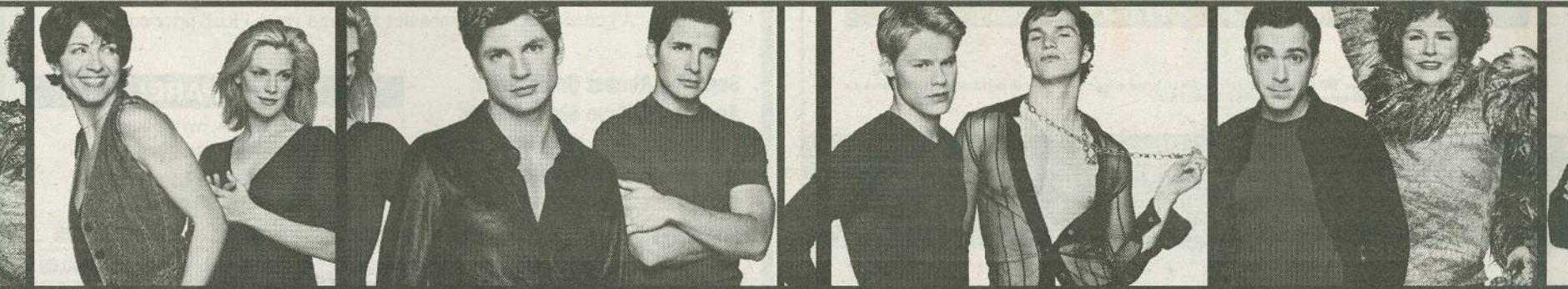
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A slick PR campaign has flooded our community with claims that Coors Brewing is now our friend—that Coors has domestic partner benefits, sponsors LGBT groups and events (usually in return for having the Coors logo prominently displayed), and that there are gay members of the Coors family. Some of this is true, but what they leave out is that the Coors family continues to give millions of dollars to our enemies.

FACT: Coors money founded the Heritage Foundation, America's premier far-right think tank, and the "cultural conservative" Free Congress Foundation. The Coors family's Castle Rock Foundation still gives these groups hundreds of thousands dollars yearly.

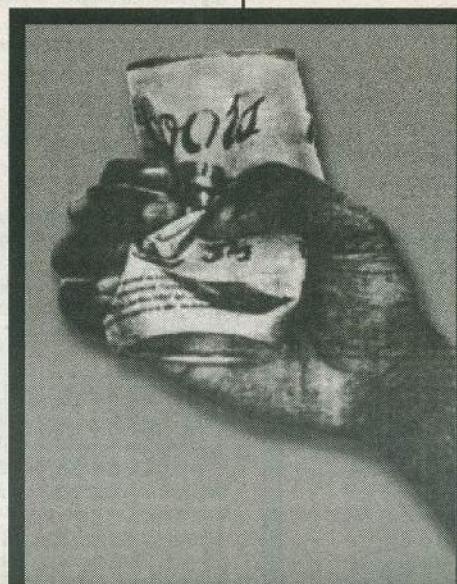
FACT: The Castle Rock Foundation board includes William Coors (chairman of Adolph Coors Co., which runs all the family businesses), brewery chairman Peter Coors, Jeffrey Coors and Holland Coors.

FACT: Jeffrey Coors is CEO of Graphic Packaging International, a Coors spin-off that provides packaging for Coors products. He's also a board member of the Free Congress Foundation (FCF)—and was its chair when FCF argued in a "friend of the court" brief in the Hawaii marriage case that homosexuality is "repugnant to... the laws of nature and nature's God" and quoted Blackstone's description of sodomy as "an infamous crime against nature."

FACT: Massive Coors family funding of right-wing homophobia continues today, including Castle Rock grants to Heritage, Free Congress (run by anti-gay TV commentator Paul Weyrich), the Center for Individual Rights, the Western Journalism Center (run by homophobe Joseph Farah), the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, Promise Keepers, the Institute on Religion and Public Life and many other fiercely homophobic groups.

FACT: Jeffrey and Holland Coors and other family members have served on the board of the Council for National Policy (CNP) — a veritable Who's Who of the anti-gay right, also supported by Castle Rock money. Members include Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, Phyllis Schlafly, Oliver North, Gary Bauer, Ed Meese, and Sen. Jesse Helms.

FACT: While most corporations (including other brewers) give to candidates on both sides of the aisle, Coors' corporate and PAC



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FACT: The Heritage Foundation criticized the Supreme Court for striking down Colorado's anti-gay Amendment 2, slammed the Legal Services Corporation for "actions [that] advance the goals of homosexual activists," and urged Congress to keep a complete ban on gays and lesbians in the military.

For more information please read:

http://www.nlg.org/committees/lgbt/lgbt_coors_statement.htm

You can find the IRS 990 forms for Castle Rock Foundation that lists amounts given to these groups at <http://www.grantsmart.org>

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Contribute to this campaign by sending a check to the NLG LGBT Committee, 558 Capp St., San Francisco, CA 94110



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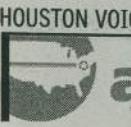
FACT: While most corporations (including other brewers) give to candidates on both sides of the aisle, Coors' corporate and PAC donations tilt heavily toward far-right, anti-gay bigots.

The Coors family has a long history of supporting racist and anti-gay groups, and their support of anti-gay bigots continues today. We could fill this paper with more examples. *When you buy Coors products, you enrich a family that gives millions of dollars to those who oppose gay rights.*

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community calendar

SATURDAY, JUNE 29

Rummage-A-Rama. Sale hosted first Saturday of each month to benefit AIDS Housing Coalition Houston. 202 Tuam Ave. 713-521-1613.

EVERY SATURDAY

All-Spanish Worship Service/Culto en español. 6 p.m. Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, 2026 W. 11th. 713-303-9403 or 713-861-9149.

After Hours. KPFT 90.1 FM. 12 a.m.-3 a.m. 713-526-5738.

Dignity mass. 7:30 p.m. for gay Catholics. 713-880-2872.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 11 p.m.-2 a.m. at Viviana's. 713-830-3000.

Gay & Lesbian Breakfast Club. 9:30 a.m. 281-437-0636.

Houston Outdoor Group. Memorial Park walk. 9:30 a.m., meet in front of tennis center. Jimmy. 713-864-7299.

Houston Wrestling Club. Practice. 1:30 p.m. 713-453-7406.

Resurrection MCC. Noche Espiritual, Spanish language worship. 6 p.m. 713-861-9149.

Q-Patrol. Volunteers walk the streets to help prevent hate crimes. 9:30 p.m. Convene at community center. 713-528-SAFE. E-mail: qpatrolinc@aol.com

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Rosary 8 a.m. 1805 W. Alabama. 713-528-6665.

Houston Gay & Lesbian Community Center. Drop-in, noon-4 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818. www.hlgcc.org.

SUNDAY, JUNE 30

EVERY SUNDAY

Anarchist Black Cross Federation/Anarchist Reading Group. 1 p.m. www.houstonabc.org. 713-595-2103

Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. Services at 8:30 & 10:50 a.m. Sunday school 9:45 a.m. 713-526-1017.

Community Gospel. Service at 11 a.m. & 7 p.m. Sunday School for children 10 a.m. 713-880-9235 or www.communitygospel.org.

Covenant Church, Ecumenical, Liberal Baptist. Service 9:30 a.m. & education hour 11 a.m. 713-668-8830.

Emerson Unitarian Church. Adult education, 10 a.m. Service, 11 a.m. Lunch at noon. www.emersonhou.org.

First Congregational Church (Memorial). Service at 10 a.m. Christian Education, 11:30 p.m. 713-468-9543 or fcc-houston.org.

We wish to invite you on our carefully planned and diligently escorted summer tour to Europe:



First Unitarian Universalist Church. Services at 9:30 & 11:30 a.m. Brunch at 10:30 a.m. 713-526-5200. church@firstuu.org.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 9 p.m.-midnight at Club Energy. 713-830-3000.

Gay Catholics of St. Anne's-Houston. 5 p.m. worship service. Dinner and social. alexcam@wt.net. 713-623-0930.

GLOBAL. Gay Lesbian Or Bisexual Alliance. University of Houston GLBT student group meeting. 2 p.m. at the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818. www.uh.edu/~global. E-mail: global@bayou.uh.edu.

Grace Lutheran Church. Sunday school for all ages 9 a.m. Service 10:30 a.m. 713-528-3269.

Houston Mission Church. Service 10:30 a.m. 713-529-8225.

Houston Tennis Club. 9 a.m.-noon. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclb@aol.com

Maranatha Fellowship Metropolitan Church. 10 a.m. service. 3333 Fannin, Suite 106. 713-528-6756.

Rainbow Riders. A bicycle club for women. 713-869-1686.

Resurrection MCC. Services, 9 and 11 a.m. Children and Youth Sunday School, 10 a.m. Children's service, 11 a.m. 713-861-9149.

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Holy Eucharist, Rite I, 7:45 a.m.; Holy Eucharist, Rite II, 8:55 a.m.; Education hour, 10 a.m.; Choral Eucharist, 11 a.m. 713-528-6665.

Sunday Brunch. For HIV-positive men. Price-fixed buffet. 11 a.m. Riva's, 1117 Missouri St. Paul. 713-880-0690. E-mail: PoznBuff@aol.com.

The Women's Group. Meeting and discussion. 10:45 a.m. 713-529-8571.

Thoreau Unitarian Universalist Congregation. Adult discussion, 9:45 a.m. Service, 11 a.m. 281-277-8882. www.tuuc.org.

Unitarian Fellowship of Galveston County. 502 Church St. Service, 10:30 a.m. 409-765-8330.

Unitarian Fellowship of Houston. Adult forum, 10 a.m. Service, 11 a.m. 713-686-5876.

Houston Gay & Lesbian Community Center. Drop-in, 2-5 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818. www.hlgcc.org.

MONDAY, JULY 1

American Veterans for Equal Rights. Monthly meeting. 7 p.m. Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

EVERY MONDAY

AIDS Mastery. 7 p.m. Montrose Counseling Center. 713-529-0037.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m.-midnight. Keys West. 713-830-3000.

Frost Eye Clinic. Free eye exams for people with HIV. 713-830-3000. gayDAR. Wellness Community. Support Group. 7 p.m. 713-526-1017, Ext. 211.

Gay Fathers/Fathers First. Support group. 8-9:30 p.m. Grace Lutheran Church. Tom. 713-726-8736. www.geocities.com/gaydadshouston/

Gay Men's Chorus of Houston. Open rehearsals, 7 p.m. 713-521-7464.

Grief & Divorce Support Groups. 7 p.m. Bering. 713-526-1017, ext. 208. Houston Tennis Club. 9 a.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. 713-692-2703.

Kolbe Project. Eucharist 7:30 p.m. 713-861-1800.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry. Open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 936-441-1614.

Queer Voices Radio Show. 8-10 p.m. KPFT 90.1. 713-529-1223.

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818. www.hlgcc.org.

TUESDAY, JULY 2

Lesbian Health Initiative of Houston, Inc. Nonprofit organization working for lesbian health meets the first Tuesday of each month. 7 p.m., 404 Westheimer. 713-603-0023. LHIHouston00@aol.com

EVERY TUESDAY

Bering Support Network. Lunch Bunch Gang, 11 a.m. 713-526-1017. CPR Classes. 3 p.m. 713-607-7700.

For Mature Audiences Only. Support group. 7 p.m. Bering Memorial UMC. 713-526-1017.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m.-midnight. Club Houston. 713-830-3000.

Gay Men's Process Group. 7 p.m. 3316 Mount Vernon. 713-526-8390.

Gay youth. New program for young gay males, ages 18-29. 7 p.m. 614 Avondale. 713-533-9786.

Helping Cross Dressers Anonymous. Support group. 7 p.m. 713-524-0439.

Houston Women's Rugby Team. No experience necessary. Practice, 6:30-8:30. Westland YMCA. Kay. 713-208-1529.

HTGA. Support group. 7 p.m. 713-520-0439.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry. Open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 281-633-2555.

Rainbow Ringers. Free C&W dance lessons. No partner required. Brazos River Bottom. 8:30 p.m. 713-528-9192.

STD exams & treatment. Free. AVES. 713-626-2837.

Spanish Charla Conversation Group. Café Agora, 7 p.m. E-mail: charlahouston@msn.com. 713-416-7203.

Women's Clinic. Montrose Clinic. 713-830-3000.

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop in 6-9 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818. www.hlgcc.org.

FRIDAY, JULY 5

Monthly service. Healing Eucharist for all affected by HIV/AIDS. First Friday of each month. 7 p.m. Golding Chapel, Christ Church Cathedral, 1117 Texas Ave. 713-222-2598.

EVERY FRIDAY

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 10 p.m.-2 a.m. at The Meatrack; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at EJ's and at Midtowne Spa. 713-830-3000.

Free HIV Testing. Thomas Street Clinic. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 2015 Thomas St. OraSure method. Call for appointment. Sharon. 713-873-4157.

Freelance Art Classes. By Kermit Eisenhut for HIV+ individuals. 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Light breakfast provided. 713-523-9530.

Frost Eye Clinic. Free eye exams for people with HIV. 713-830-3000.

Govinda Yoga Club. Free yoga classes at 3115 West Loop South, No. 21. 713-439-0455.

Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals (H.A.T.C.H.) Meeting. 713-942-7002.

Houston Tennis Club. 7:30-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclb@aol.com

Kolbe Project. Morning prayer, 10 a.m. 713-861-1800.

Mishpachat Alzim. GLBT Jewish congregation. Sabbath services at 8 p.m. on the second Friday of each month at Baby Barnabys, 602 Fairview. Monthly study groups with Congregation Beth Israel, 5600 North Braeswood. Mishpachat Alzim, P.O. Box

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houston voice

ISSUE 1132

WWW.HOUSTONVOICE.COM

ALL THE NEWS FOR YOUR LIFE. AND YOUR STYLE.

JULY 5, 2002

INSIDE



Gay entertainment guide This Week In Texas falls short of an in-print comeback.

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Comical

Gay comic book artist offers insight into his work.
Page 13



Schools protect gay youth

Houston trustees vote to include sexual orientation as a protected status in student code of conduct

By PENNY WEAVER

Gay students in Houston Independent School District facilities may rest easier this year thanks to new language in the student code of conduct.

HISD board trustees last Thursday approved a non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation as a protected status.

According to school district officials' written report after the meeting, "To promote a climate of respect for all, the Code of Student Conduct requires students to respect the rights and privileges of other students, teachers, and district staff members. After considerable discussion by the board, the Code now prohibits 'any verbal abuse or bullying of others, including, but not limited to, slurs, name-calling or derogatory statements, including derogatory comments to another person because of that person's race, color, reli-

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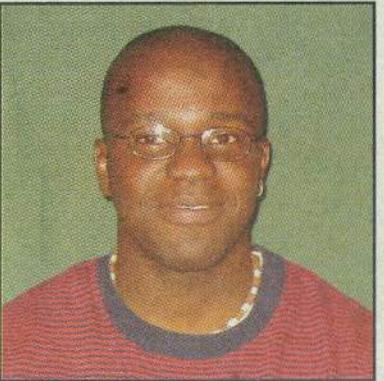
Please see SCHOOLS, on Page 6

graphic by Bonnie Naule



Gay entertainment guide This Week In Texas falls short of an in-print comeback.

Page 4



A new study from the University of Arkansas says that homophobia is not a phobia.

Page 5



Women's football — both professional and amateur — is just one of the sports options this month for gay Houstonians.

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IN STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

By PENNY WEAVER

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Please see SCHOOLS, on Page 6

statements, including derogatory comments to another person because of that person's race, color, religion, national origin, disability, physical/personal appearance or sexual orientation."

graphic by Bonnie Naugle

Pride makes history again

Rainbow colors were the theme of the evening on Saturday as gay Houstonians took to the streets for the 24th annual Houston Pride Parade. (Photos by Dalton Dehart)



Thousands gather as rain stops for nighttime parade that organizers call largest, most diverse yet

By PENNY WEAVER

All-day rainfall on Saturday stopped just in time for the clouds to part and revelers to take to the streets for the 24th annual Houston Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Pride Parade.

Organizers said this year's event was the largest and most diverse so far, with more than 130,000 spectators lining the streets in Montrose to view the parade.

"The consensus among the committee was that this was definitely our largest parade ever," said Nick Brines, fund-raising director for the Pride Committee of Houston, which coordinated the parade and most Pride Week events. "The energy was excellent out there. There was really, really positive, fun energy."

"It's amazing when you're out there and you see there's

Please see PRIDE, on Page 2

local news

Parade awards doled out

PRIDE, continued from Page 1

so many types of us in every shape and color, and it's really great to see everybody come together that night," he added.

Even with so many people packing the Montrose area, Houston Police Department officers on hand had few problems.

"We're only aware of two arrests for public intoxication, which, based upon the size of the crowd, is not bad at all. It went very peacefully," said HPD spokesperson John Cannon. "Everyone was well-behaved. There were no major disturbances."

More than 130 entries made up the nighttime parade, including entries sponsored by gay organizations and businesses, government leaders, national corporations and major media outlets.

Houston Mayor Lee Brown rode in the parade for the third consecutive year. Other officials taking part in the event included Houston City Council members Ada Edwards, Gordon Quan and Annise Parker, who is the only openly gay member of the council; state Rep. Garnet Coleman and state Rep. Debra Danburg; and U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee.

The Houston Fire Department had its first entry in the parade, with Chief Chris Connealy riding atop the department's Tower 6 truck.

Two founders of the parade, Ray Hill and Larry Bagnoris, also participated in this year's event.

Prizes awarded for parade entries were:

- "Ruby Slipper" award for best walking

unit: Houston Pride Band.

- "Gypsy Rose" award for best out-of-town unit: Rainbow Ranch.
- "Edison" award for best lighting on a non-professionally built float: Montrose Counseling Center.
- "Houston" award for the best nonprofessionally built motorized unit: PFLAG.
- "Rainbow Lights" award for the best lighting on a professionally built unit: JPMorgan Chase Bank P.R.I.D.E. Team.
- "Texas" award for the best professionally built motorized unit: Club Inergy.
- "Stonewall" award for the unit best commemorating Pride: Bering Memorial United Methodist Church.
- "Pride Worldwide" award for the unit best interpreting the 2002 Pride theme: Krewe of Olympus.
- "Spirit of Montrose" award for the best unit overall: Houston Fire Department.

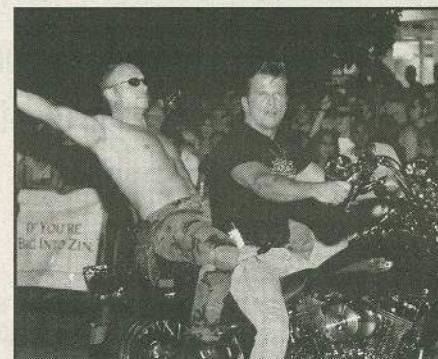
Judges this year were Rich Arenschieldt of the Center for AIDS; Kay Dayus of the Houston Voice; Jone Devlin of the Texas Triangle; Heather Raynor of Red Bull; and Fred Walters Jr., executive director of the Houston Buyers' Club.



PRIDE INFO

Pride Committee of Houston
P.O. Box 66071
Houston, TX 77266-6071
713-529-6979
www.pridehouston.org
E-mail: info@pridehouston.org

Several local entertainers offered their talents on stage (right) at the Pride cabaret. Houston Police Department officers (below)



Several local artists (left) contributed their work to a Pride Week art sale that benefited the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Motorcycle riders (below left) joined Pride Parade entries of pickup trucks, convertibles, vans and more. Adults and youth alike (below) enjoyed the family picnic at Hermann Park on June 23 as part of Pride Week.

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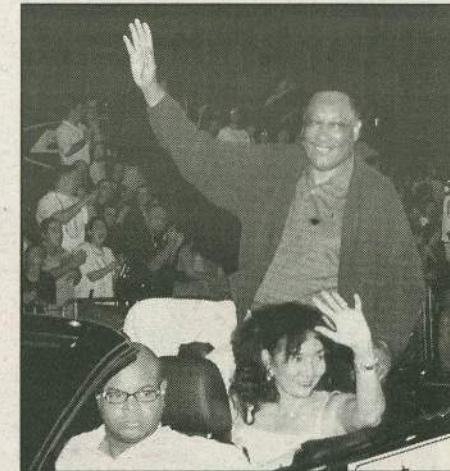
- "Ruby Slipper" award for best walking

Several local entertainers offered their talents on stage (right) at the Pride cabaret. Houston Police Department officers (below) stopped by the family picnic at Hermann Park on June 23 for Family & Youth Day.

unit overall: Houston Fire Department. Judges this year were Rich Arenschieldt of the Center for AIDS; Kay Dayus of the Houston Voice; Jone Devlin of the Texas Triangle; Heather Raynor of Red Bull; and Fred Walters Jr., executive director of the Houston Buyers' Club.

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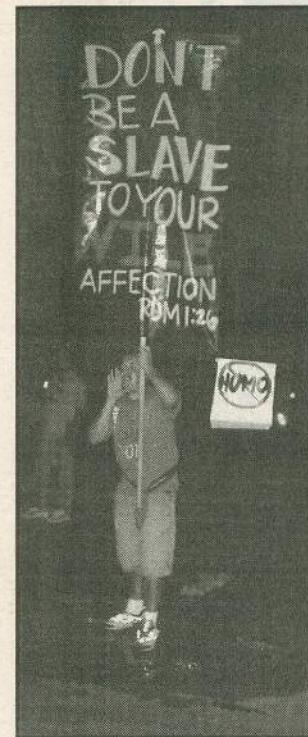


Choices of attire (above) were as diverse as everything else for folks who participated in the parade. Houston Mayor Lee Brown (right) made his third appearance in the annual parade. (All photos by Dalton Dehart)

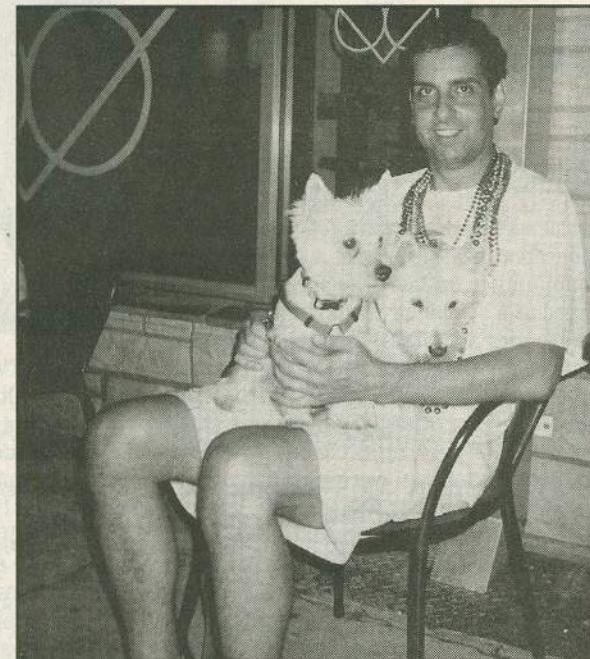


Walking entries in the Saturday evening parade included a large group with Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG) of Houston.

local news



Protesters lined up on a portion of Westheimer (above) as the Pride Parade got under way. Pride Parade watchers included those of the four-legged variety, escorted by their human counterparts (above right). (Photos by Penny Weaver). Mary's...Naturally (right) was surrounded by Pride Parade spectators. (Photo by Dalton Dehart)

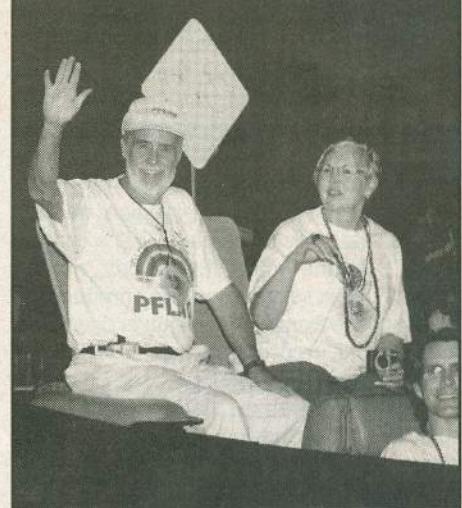


Pride Parade judges (top) enjoyed prime locations to watch the event and make their decisions to dole out awards. The Houston Fire Department's entry (above) in this year's Pride Parade was its first ever. 2002 Pride Parade grand marshals included Irv and Jane Smith of PFLAG (right). (Photos by Dalton Dehart)



HOUSTON PRIDE
2002

A number of spectators enjoyed the first-ever Pride cabaret on Friday, June 28, at Alley Theater.



*We don't want you in the closet...
We want you in a whole house!!!*

local news

Magazine's in-print comeback fizzles

This Week In Texas, once a gay guide for the entire state, lacks financial backing for new print edition

By PENNY WEAVER

Although its current publisher says reader demand exists, **This Week In Texas** missed its planned comeback edition this month due to a lack of financial support.

TWIT ceased publication in August 2000 after 26 years as a gay guide for all of Texas. At the time, publisher Alan Gellman said the 22,000-circulation magazine was "dead in the water, and it is not coming back in its present form," the Houston Voice reported.

Steve Pardue, current TWIT publisher/editor, said this week that the planned new print version of the magazine has reader support but not enough financial backing. Ovation Publishing is parent company for TWIT, according to its Web site.

"They wanted TWIT. Everywhere we went [people said], 'We're so glad TWIT's coming back,'" Pardue said. "Everybody wanted TWIT; I'm just sorry we couldn't produce it."

Response from potential advertisers was hot and cold, according to Pardue. The most support came from Houston-area businesses and organizations, but in other cities such as Dallas and San Antonio, potential supporters showed no enthusiasm, he said.

"The advertisers said mostly they were

under contract with [other publications], and so they couldn't do both right now," Pardue said. "I also lost my financial backers. Basically, that's what I'm looking for now."

A pair of individuals had provided financial support for the venture, but Pardue said they withdrew that support.

"They started wanting demands that I just couldn't agree with," he said. "That didn't work."

TWIT's online version includes a list of businesses and organizations that were ready to advertise in the new printed version. At this point, September would be the earliest that an in-print TWIT would appear, according to Pardue, and that magazine may narrow its focus.

"We're thinking about doing just a Houston thing. We got so much support from Houston," Pardue said. "It was just too much" to try to cover the entire state, he added.

"We did have something that nobody else had — basically a recipe that no one else had, that no one else chose to capitalize on," he said. "It'll work as soon as we can get the money together. The printing is so expensive it's ridiculous."

The original TWIT closed nearly two years ago in debt and with a dwindling advertising base. It was the only weekly gay statewide entertainment guide, according to Gellman, and known for its racy pictures of male cover models.

At that time, the magazine employed about 13 people full-time, located mostly in

two offices in Dallas and Houston, the Voice reported in 2000. All lost their jobs when TWIT ceased publishing.

TWIT started in 1975 as an eight-page newsletter reproduced on a copy machine. The publication helped to build a sense of a gay community in the late 1970s and early '80s and served as a symbol of the domination of gay life by bars and clubs, Ray Hill, a longtime Houston gay civil rights activist, told the Voice.

Pardue worked for TWIT in the 1980s and '90s, left for other employment, and had just returned prior to its closing in 2000. He said he and Gellman were good friends.

"When I heard it was closing, Alan let me have the Web site," Pardue said.

Interested in publishing a similar magazine recently, Pardue discovered that the name **This Week In Texas** was not registered, so he registered it and is pursuing a copyright, with or without the printed product.

Pardue discounted rumors that advertisers who signed a contract with the new TWIT will not receive refunds now that the magazine is not printing.

"How could they be locked into a contract when there's no product? I sent everybody their money back," Pardue said. "If there's no product, then there's nothing for them to be locked into."

"Maybe it's just a misunderstanding," he added. "I don't know why anybody would think that they would be under contract with a publication that doesn't exist."

Several potential TWIT advertisers, as list-

The Aug. 11, 2000, edition of **This Week In Texas** was the last one for that publication, and a planned comeback for the printed version of the magazine failed this month, although its Web site is operational.



ed on the TWIT Web site, told the Voice this week that although they had signed contracts, they had not paid for advertising up-front.

Those include Rich's Houston, and Gary Archer, a spokesperson for the club, said he still would like to see the magazine return.

"It's a disappointment that TWIT is not going to be able to [come back yet]," Archer said Wednesday. "Certainly it is welcome. I look at as more nostalgia than anything. It's kind of a wait-and-see attitude at this point."

Pardue is not giving up on the magazine's in-print comeback.

"All I need now is some more money," Pardue said. "We're ready to go again. We had a lot of good things that we wanted to bring back to the community."

FOR INFO

This Week In Texas
c/o Ovation Publishing
2620 S. Shepherd Dr., No. 204
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713-779-4366

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