

pride  
PRESS RELEASE



**Pride Committee of Houston, Inc.**  
PO Box 66071  
Houston, Texas 77266-6071  
PrideLine: 713.529.6979  
Fax: 713.529.6929  
e-mail: info@pridehouston.org

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jack Valinski  
Executive Director  
Mobile: 713.562.6580  
e-mail: info@pridehouston.org

Troy Christensen  
Publications Director  
Phone: 713.524.2637  
e-mail: tchristensen@uh.edu

May 28, 2000

### Scores of Events Mark Houston Lesbian and Gay Pride Celebration June 9-24

#### HOUSTON, TEXAS

Houston's annual Lesbian & Gay Pride festivities, to be held June 9-24, will feature a variety of social, charitable, cultural and educational events throughout the city that commemorate the history of the lesbian and gay civil rights movement and celebrate the diversity and unity of the community.

The 16-day festival will culminate in the city's fourth annual nighttime Pride Parade on Saturday, June 24. The parade steps off at 9 p.m. on Westheimer between Woodhead and Whitney.

Parades and other festivals are held all over the world in June to mark the anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion in Greenwich Village in New York, an uprising against police injustice in 1969 that birthed the modern American lesbian and gay rights movement.

Houston's Pride Parade is unique among the many across America. The city has had one every June since 1979, but in 1997 the parade was moved from Sunday afternoon to Saturday evening to escape the summer heat. Houston became the only city in the U.S. to have a nighttime Pride Parade.

The move has had a dramatic effect, say organizers on the Pride Committee of Houston. While attendance had been diminishing over the years, the first nighttime parade in 1997 had a huge turnout and both the number of parade entries and the size of the audience have been on the rise since.

The higher attendance is partly due to the cooler nighttime conditions, but organizers also cite the Mardi Gras-type atmosphere of the parade as a crowd-pleaser. Organizations sponsoring entries are

#### **America's Original Nighttime Pride Parade**

The Pride Committee of Houston produces a number of events and programs to celebrate gay and lesbian pride, commemorate our history and educate society in promoting the liberation of all people. The annual nighttime Pride Parade, which marks the anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion, the beginning of the modern American gay and lesbian rights movement, is the largest pride parade in the Southwest and the second largest annual parade in Houston.

encouraged to toss beads and promotional items to attendees and to be creative in designing and lighting their floats or other types of units.

The celebratory nature of the Houston Pride Parade and all of its elements—including the 8 1/2-foot suspended and illuminated disco ball that was introduced last year—have an important social impact, organizers said. This impact, they said, is reflected in the international Pride 2000 theme, “Take Pride, Take Joy, Take Action.”

“This theme was picked by the international association of Pride organizers, of which we’re an active part, so we share it with gay and lesbian communities around the world,” Pride Committee Executive Director Jack Valinski said. “The theme is appropriate for this new millennium. It causes us to reflect on all of the progress our community has made in the realm of equal rights, like the recent announcement that same-sex couples will soon be able to enter into civil unions in Vermont. It also tells us that we must remain active in ending the threats to our lives, such as anti-gay hatred and violence, and keep progressing.”

Pride Committee organizers say the commitment to social change inherent in the Pride celebration is also reflected in the selection of Grand Marshals for the parade. They said the Grand Marshals are selected through a citywide vote for their achievements and leadership in the gay and lesbian community.

Grand Marshals for the 2000 parade are Tori Williams and, in memoriam, Richard Wiederholt. The Honorary Grand Marshal is Don Sinclair and People with AIDS Coalition of Houston is the Honorary Grand Marshal - Organization.

Williams, who will serve as Female Grand Marshal of the Pride Parade, has founded or led several efforts to support the Houston lesbian and gay community through AIDS activism, healthcare and the arts. Some of her many volunteer and leadership efforts have included DIFFA, Pet Patrol, Hazelwitch Productions, HeartSong and AssistHers.

Male Grand Marshal Richard Wiederholt passed away on April 28, 2000, leaving behind a legacy of commitment to the community. His Basic Brothers clothing store has served gay and lesbian customers, as well as sponsoring community activities and serving as a central location for event tickets and information, since 1982. Wiederholt was a founding board member of the Greater Houston Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce and served on the organizing committee for the Chamber’s Empower ’99 community expo. As an ardent AIDS activist, Wiederholt was President of the Program for Wellness

Restoration and a member of the Body Positive Wellness Center's advisory board, among other leadership roles.

While he was pastor of Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, Honorary Grand Marshal Don Sinclair spearheaded the church's many AIDS programs. Under his leadership, Bering became a Reconciling Congregation, publicly including all in the life of the church, regardless of sexual orientation, and specifically honoring and working for the full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people. He has also been a major force in the fight against hate-based violence and religious bigotry. Sinclair continues the fight against violence and hatred as an active member of P-FLAG's speakers' bureau.

People with AIDS Coalition of Houston, the 2000 Honorary Grand Marshal - Organization, has operated a number of services to assist Houstonians living with HIV/AIDS since 1986 and has diversified and expanded its programs in response to the changing face of the disease. PWACH meets the sustenance, medical and psychosocial needs of its clients through healthcare, case management, housing, housing assistance and childcare programs operating from the organization's central office in the heart of Montrose and its satellite offices throughout the city.

While the parade is the most visible event during Houston's annual Pride festival, community organizations are also sponsoring a number of other events throughout June. These events, Pride organizers say, celebrate the diversity of Houston's gay and lesbian community by highlighting its many different aspects. Events include the performing arts, such as films, concerts and plays; art exhibits; religious services; fundraisers; educational seminars; history exhibitions; and recreational activities. A full list of events is available at the Pride Committee web site, [www.pridehouston.org](http://www.pridehouston.org).

Over the past several years, Houston Pride events have been increasingly enjoyed by out-of-town visitors, Pride organizers said. To make travel more convenient for the weekend of the Pride Parade, the Holiday Inn Select at Greenway Plaza will offer a flat, per-night rate of \$69 per room for up to four people. Call 713-523-8448 and ask for the "Houston Pride Celebration" rate.

For Pride Kick-off weekend, June 9-11, a flat, per-night rate of \$55 per room for up to four people is available at the Radisson Hotel Astrodome Convention Center. Call 800-627-6461 and ask for the "Houston Pride Celebration" rate. Among the events that weekend are the annual Kick-off Party and "Pride Weekend in the Park" at AstroWorld and WaterWorld.

The Kick-off Party marks the beginning of Pride 2000 and will be held from 6-10 p.m. on Friday, June 9, at the Lovett Inn, 501 Lovett. The party will feature complimentary food and drinks and a chance to mingle with other members of the community.

"Pride Weekend," Saturday and Sunday, June 10-11, is an expansion of the Pride Committee's AstroWorld event from the past two years. This year's \$25 per person ticket will cover admission to AstroWorld on Saturday, as well as a BBQ buffet at the Pride Committee's private dining area at the theme park and entertainment by Miami-based dance group Funky Green Dogs and local talent for Pride ticket holders only at AstroWorld's Showcase Theater. The ticket also covers admission to Rich's nightclub Saturday evening and admission to WaterWorld on Sunday. The "Pride Weekend" is produced with support from Coor's Light and Rich's and will feature music in the private dining area at AstroWorld by Pride media sponsor 104 KRBE. Tickets are available at Basic Brothers, Leather by Boots and Lobo and from Pride Committee coordinators.

For more information about Pride 2000 events or about how you can get involved in Pride activities, call the PrideLine at 713-529-6979 or e-mail [info@pridehouston.org](mailto:info@pridehouston.org).