

Cinderella community shines at North County Pride

By Melanie Yarborough (Neutral Corner)



San Diego's LGBTQ sisters and brothers in North County have sometimes been considered an underrated and overlooked Cinderella community. However, this past Oct. 8, North County's LGBTQ Resource Center and the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence strutted their stuff with their 9th annual *Pride by the Beach* festival.

The event was held in Oceanside, on two blocks of Pier View Way east of Coast Highway 101. A modest (but effective!) motorcycle contingent inaugurated the proceedings.

Glitz Glam, the Mistress of Ceremonies, hosted the stage show, with a special guest appearance from *Sister Unity* of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. Other guests included Oceanside Deputy Mayor Chuck Lowery, performer Jackie Beat, vocalist Celeste Barbier, and indie bands Ingenuie and The Social Animal. Oceanside Mayor Jim Wood visited the booths, welcomed participants and showed his support. The street fair itself included tarot reading, food and souvenir stands, and even the local bookmobile.

Well established community organizations were on hand to support North County Pride, including PFLAG, Dignity, the Woman's Resource Center, and Fellowship of Older Gays (FOG), and Bears San Diego.



The Health community made a strong showing through the Vista Community Clinic, North County Health Services, the Hillcrest Pharmacy, the Family Health Clinic Network and Michaelle House and Fraternity House HIV care centers.

The transgender community showed its increasing visibility, with representatives from The North County Center's Gender Advocacy Project (GAP), San Diego's Neutral Corner, Transfamily Support Services, and the T-Spot. They were all

happy to answer questions, offer insights and direct interested parties to resources.

Significantly, a number of parents of transgender children visited the event. It needs to be remembered that last year in San Diego, four transyouth took their own lives. Clearly, there's a need for a strong and organized transgender community to offer information and support.

More somber but important guest organizations included the Hands for Africa organization, which works to empower amputee survivors of the "Blood Diamond Wars", and WE ARE ORLANDO to commemorate those who lost their lives in the horrific hate crime this past June.



And most significantly, the faith community was well represented: the Pilgrim United Church of Christ, All Saints American Catholic Church, the Unitarian Universalists, Trinity Episcopal Church, and Holy Cross Episcopal Church. Their support shows that the LGBTQ community and the Church need not be strangers!

Pride by the Beach Sponsors included the Imperial Court, Tri-City Medical Center, Vista Community Clinic, Mission Plaza

Pharmacy, Hillcrest Pharmacy, Holiday Inn, Main Street Oceanside, Astroglide, Urban Mo's, and the Unitarian Universalists. Special thanks go to the City of Oceanside, who graciously provided the area surrounding the Oceanside Civic Center for the event.

It was an afternoon of festival and fun, but the best part was seeing the variety of people: lesbian, gay, bisexual, butch, nelly, bear, leather, trans, and genderqueer...as well as youth, elders, parents, and allies. Some came with questions, some to network, some to show support, and some just to enjoy the afternoon. But all received acceptance and affirmation. Pride by the Beach is, at its core, about celebrating and being celebrated for being true to oneself.

Many people tirelessly gave their time and energy to make the event possible, including Shannon Rose, Pride by The Beach director and Chris Gow, vendor coordinator. Shannon mentioned to this writer that that, like the train in the famed children story "The Little Engine that Could", the North County LGBTQ Resource Center is "The Little Center That Could...and Did!". She particularly singled out North County Center founder and executive director Max Disposti. Through his tireless work, he has "made the community visible". And Shannon emphasized that even in one of the more conservative parts of the county, the Center has been able to put together a successful and growing Pride event year after year.

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