



Gay/Lesbian News

## Miami Gets Ready for Winter Party

Miami is preparing for the biggest party of the year this weekend - the annual Winter Party - a weeklong festival that brings thousands of gay and lesbian visitors from all over the world.

**Even though the Winter Party is one of the biggest parties of the year in South Florida, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force organizers want everyone to know that the festival has a serious side, too.**

"When the Task Force took over Winter Party, one of the missions was to make sure it was not just a [men's] circuit party but a series of events to reach out to ... the entire spectrum of the community. Transgender people, LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] families and youth," said Michael Bath, Miami's Task Force special events manager, to the [Miami Herald](#). "We don't have a pride celebration in Miami. This is about the closest thing we have to it."

Besides the 15th annual beach party, Winter Party Festival this year includes an interfaith religious service, a picnic for gay families, a "Hollywood Nights" youth event and a preview of a new memorial to gay hate-crime victims.

Bath expects 10,000 visitors from all over the world to attend this year's festival, with events in Miami-Dade and Broward counties.

"We're getting a lot of folks from out of the country," he said. "We've advertised in a lot of gay publications in Argentina, the U.K., Canada, France. Our slogan is, 'The U.S. dollar is weak, the Miami sun is strong,' to capitalize on the advantage of a U.S. vacation right now."

The festival began in Miami Beach in 1994 with a one-day beach dance party off Ocean [Drive](#) and has helped finance a new foundation to benefit local gay groups.

To read more about the Winter Party, and to check out the schedule, got to <http://www.winterparty.com/>