

Winter Party is fun -- but hosts mean business

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BY STEVE ROTHBAUS, srothaus@MiamiHerald.com

Winter Party is a day at the beach, but National Gay and Lesbian Task Force organizers want everyone to know that the big, weeklong 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. "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 campaign apparently is working. "We're ahead of where we were last year financially," he said.

The festival began in Miami Beach in 1994 with a one-day beach dance party off Ocean Drive. Winter Party helped finance a new foundation to benefit local gay groups. The Task Force bought the event, as well as the foundation's annual autumn recognition dinner, after the fundraising group went under in 2004.

The Task Force agreed to keep two-thirds of all net profits from the events in Miami-Dade County, giving the money to the Dade Community Foundation's GLBT Community Project Fund.

"Last year, we donated \$160,000," Bath said. "This year it should be higher. The dinner alone, we believe, netted about \$200,000."

Recent GLBT Community Project Fund beneficiaries include the Miami Gay & Lesbian Film Festival, Pridelines Youth Services, YES Institute for gay youth and SAVE, the county's leading gay-rights group.

Alison Burgos, a South Florida events planner and board president of Aqua Foundation for Women, says the Task Force has fulfilled its promise to South Florida's gay people.

"They understood they should embrace the entire community, including women and youth and our transgender community," Burgos said. "The Task Force has done a great job in recognizing that and meeting those needs."

Photo by Jared Lazarus / Miami Herald File

WINTER PARTY FESTIVAL SCHEDULE (Visit www.winterparty.com for updates)

SATURDAY, FEB. 23

- **Hollywood Nights: An event for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning) youth and their allies**, 6 to 9 p.m., Legion Park, 6447 NE Seventh Ave., Miami.

SUNDAY, FEB. 24

- **LGBT Family Picnic**, noon to 4 p.m., TopeeKeegee Yugnee (TY Park), Pavilion 8, 3300 N. Park Rd., Hollywood. Co-hosted by Winter Party Festival and South Florida Family Pride.

TUESDAY, FEB. 26

- **Winter Party Festival Happy Hour**, 5 to 7 p.m., Halo, 1625 Michigan Ave., Miami Beach.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 27

- **Departure Lounge**, 7 to 9:30 p.m., Doubletree Surfcomber Hotel, 1717 Collins Ave., Miami Beach. Showtime presents the official Winter Party Festival welcome party, a poolside reception with cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, music and raffle prizes.

THURSDAY, FEB. 28

- **Preview of Gay American Heroes: A National Memorial to Celebrate Their Lives**, 6 to 8 p.m., Miami Beach Botanical Gardens, 2000 Convention Center Dr., Miami Beach. Visit the model of the national traveling memorial honoring LGBT people murdered because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Days Without Sunshine: Anita Bryant's Anti-Gay Crusade**, 6 to 8 p.m., Miami Beach Botanical Gardens, 2000 Convention Center Dr., Miami Beach. The Stonewall Library & Archives of Fort Lauderdale brings its exhibit to Winter Party Festival.
- **Winter Prayer, Winter Praise: The 2nd annual Interfaith Service of Winter Party Festival**, 7 to 9 p.m., Temple Israel of Greater Miami, 137 NE 19th St., Miami. Join LGBT-friendly congregations and spiritual groups from around South Florida.
- **Women's Art Exhibit**, 7 to 10 p.m., Vine Wine Shop, 7657 Biscayne Blvd., Miami. Shop hosts *Water: A Study on the Complexity of Women and Water*, an exhibit exploring how three visual artists liken women to water.
- **Sephora Shopping Spree**, 9 to 11 p.m., Sephora, 721 Collins Ave., Miami Beach.
- **Blast Off!** 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., Score, 727 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach. Music by DJ Phil B. and DJ Pride. Decor provided by Visual XS Designs.

FEB. 29

• **Days Without Sunshine: Anita Bryant's Anti-Gay Crusade**, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Miami Beach Botanical Gardens, 2000 Convention Center Dr., Miami Beach.

• **Winter Party Runway Happy Hour**, 5 to 7 p.m., Halo, 1625 Michigan Ave., Miami Beach. Music by DJ Oren Nizri.

• **Winter Party Runway**, 7 to 8 p.m., Lincoln Road at Euclid Circle, Miami Beach. DJ Sayho provides the music during outdoor fashion show. Daniel Schuman of VH1's *America's Most Smartest Model* hosts.

• **Winter Party Festival Cocktail Party**, 7:30 to 11 p.m., Van Dyke Cafe, 846 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach. Edison Farrow presents party featuring local jazz star Nicole Henry.

• **Women's Cocktail Hour**, 8 to 11 p.m., Townhouse, 150 20th St., Miami Beach.

• **Special Preview Reception for Gay American Heroes: A National Memorial to Celebrate Their Lives**, 7:30 to 10 p.m., (program starts at 8:45 p.m.), Miami Beach Botanical Gardens, 2000 Convention Center Dr., Miami Beach. Meet the families of Ryan Keith Skipper and Sean Kennedy, both murdered in 2007. Celebrate their lives, learn about hate crimes against LGBT persons and about the project to construct a national traveling memorial to honor LGBT victims. Suggested donation at door: \$25.

• **The Uniform Party**, 10 p.m. to 7 a.m., Space, 34 NE 11th St., Miami. Show off your uniform of choice while dancing to the music of DJs Brett Henrichsen, Manny Lehman, Greg Drescher and Harmonix. Presented by Manhunt.net.; decor provided by Visual XS Designs.

MARCH 1

• **Under One Sun Pool Party**, noon to 6 p.m., Doubletree Surfcomber Hotel, 1717 Collins Ave., Miami Beach. DJ Alyson Calagna spins.

• **Preview of Gay American Heroes: A National Memorial to Celebrate Their Lives**, 6 to 8 p.m., Miami Beach Botanical Gardens, 2000 Convention Center Dr., Miami Beach. Visit the model of the national traveling memorial honoring LGBT people murdered because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

• **Beautiful Dreamer: Dinner Party for the Transgender Community**, 7 p.m. to midnight, Cafe Pisa, Wachovia Tower, 1 E. Broward Blvd, Fort Lauderdale. Features a cocktail reception, dinner, presentation by sexologist and author Dr. Marilyn Volker, and entertainment by Mark Angelo, Sandy Collins, Topaz and Boom Boom.

• **Leather and Fetish Fantasy**, 10 p.m. to 3 a.m., Steel, 1951 NW Ninth Ave. (Powerline Road), Fort Lauderdale. DJ Randy Bettis.

• **Pandora and Ultra Events Present Industry**, 10 p.m. to 4 a.m., China Grill, 404 Washington Ave., Miami Beach. DJ Alex H.

• **Under the Stars**, 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., Karu & Y Club, 71 NW 14th St., Miami. South Florida promoter Hilton Wolman presents DJ team Rosabel (Ralphi Rosario and Abel).

MARCH 2

- **Women's Jazz Brunch**, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Van Dyke Cafe, 846 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach. Features music of Karina Iglesias.

- **The 15th annual Winter Party Beach Party**, noon to 6 p.m., Lummus Park, near 12th Street and Ocean Drive, Miami Beach. DJ Joe Gauthreaux.

- **Ascension presents Winter Party Tea Dance**, 6 to 11 p.m., The National Hotel, 1677 Collins Ave., Miami Beach. DJ David Knapp. Poolside, outdoor barbecue available.

- **Orbit**, 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., Cameo, 1445 Washington Ave., Miami Beach. DJ Tony Moran.

MARCH 3

- **BPM: Red Eye**, Starts at 4 a.m., parkwestnightclub, 30 NE 11th St., Miami. DJ Peter Rauhofer.

FOR MORE INFO:

www.winterparty.com for event details, ticket packages and prices. Volunteers can also sign up.