



## **Marriage victory to be celebrated in Calif. Pride events**

San Francisco parade in two weeks; San Diego's in July

CHRIS JOHNSON

*Friday, June 13, 2008*

Organizers planning various Pride events throughout California are drawing on the jubilation surrounding last month's legalization of same-sex marriage in the state to fuel their celebrations.

Pride events will celebrate the May 15 ruling from the California Supreme Court permitting same-sex nuptials as well as highlight the need to preserve the ruling when California voters decide the fate of a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage this November.

The marriage victory was a significant part of Pride in Los Angeles, which took place last weekend.

Rodney Scott, president of the Christopher Street West Association, which organizes L.A. Pride, said the ruling changed the atmosphere of this year's event.

"We definitely saw a level of commitment and enthusiasm from our participants in this year's celebration and I think much of that had to do with the marriage issue," he said.

The organizers of San Francisco Pride, known as the largest gay celebration in the country, are also highlighting the marriage victory in their event, which will take place on the weekend of June 28.

Brendon Behan, communications director for San Francisco Pride, said organizers have been working with marriage activists to find ways to incorporate the marriage victory into the celebration.

"Not only are we having our event on the steps of City Hall where the marriages first took place in 2004 ... but we also know that there are a lot of people around the country that are looking to San Francisco Pride as the place to celebrate because the battle sort of began here," he said.

San Francisco Pride will feature an information booth dedicated to educating people about new marriage rights. Visitors can consult the booth to learn about locations where they can be married and find out how to be deputized to perform marriage ceremonies.

The organizers of San Diego Pride are also integrating the marriage victory into their event. The celebration there will take place the weekend of July 19.

Ron DeHart, executive director for San Diego Pride, said a speaker, most likely from Equality California, will share status updates with attendees about same-sex marriage in California. Another speaker from the San Diego LGBT Community Center will let people know how they can volunteer to fight against the November ballot initiative.

DeHart expects a lot of contingencies and floats in the San Diego Pride parade to focus on the marriage victory.

“People have been sharing some of their ideas — my expectation is that the marriage theme will be very, very prevalent throughout the parade,” he said.

The opening float for San Francisco Pride will be “themed around celebrating the legal victory for same-sex couples,” Behan said. Organizers are still working out the details.

One of the contingencies of the Los Angeles Pride parade featured two of the couples that brought the lawsuit before the California high court for the right to marry. Rev. Troy Perry and his partner, Philip DeBlicek, presided over a float with fellow plaintiffs Robin Tyler and her partner, Diane Olson.

L.A. Pride organizers honored the two plaintiff couples with awards at a brunch that took place on the Sunday before the parade.

Scott said L.A. Pride organizers decided to honor the couples before the ruling came down because they had “the courage to ... step up with the other plaintiffs to be putting their name on the line saying that we should have the right to marry.”

Gloria Allred, the lawyer who represented the two couples, also appeared on an L.A. Pride float. Other lawyers involved with the 14 plaintiff couples, such as lawyers from Lambda Legal, had contingencies in the parade.

Karen Ocamb, a lesbian writer who has been covering L.A. Pride for 20 years, said in a piece for the Bilerico Project that this year’s Pride was a “markedly different” and a more relaxed celebration compared to Prides in previous years. The 2008 festivities focused more on celebrating an earned victory as opposed to gearing up for a future fight — even though the victory could be taken from gay couples come November, Ocamb wrote.

“Sure, there were signs and stickers saying ‘No on the Marriage Ban’ and lots of applause for the couples who won the marriage equality case — but the emphasis was on getting married, not on holding onto that right,” Ocamb wrote.

**But Sarah Reece, project director for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, said her organization is taking advantage of events like L.A. Pride to ensure that people are aware of the upcoming ballot initiative. More than 100 volunteers were at L.A. Pride to solicit attendees and recruit volunteers for the campaign against the measure.**

**The volunteers made sure people were waving banners reflecting support for the “Equality for All” and “Vow to Vote ‘No’” campaigns.**

**“We want to make sure that everybody in the LGBT community understands that, come November, we all have to get out and vote and vote ‘no,’” she said. “We got a lot of voters to talk to between now and November and we just simply need more people to help us do that.”**

Behan said activists will also be engaging people during San Francisco Pride to ensure that people are aware of the upcoming marriage ballot initiative this fall.

“We are working with activists to make sure the ‘Vow to Vote “No” campaign’ really has a presence at our site so that they are engaging people at the event to make a stand for marriage equality,” he said.

