

Region

# Gay festival mixes rebellion and family

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**PHILADELPHIA** — There was an atmosphere of rebellion at Sunday's Pride Day festival, but there was also an element of family.

While the party celebrating gay pride is known for its revelry, it is not only visited by the young and single. It is also the destination of gay families, whose numbers are growing.

Angela Pacheco is living a non-traditional life. Pacheco, who lives in Ridley Park, came out of the heterosexual closet, divorced her husband, and is currently raising her two daughters with the help of her lesbian partner.

Pacheco said the decision to radically alter her life in order to express herself sincerely was no simple matter.

"I struggled with it," she said. "And I know it's even harder for the kids."

As she rested in the cool shade of a tent, thousands partied in the bright sun. There was a hint of arrogance in the dance.

It might be because pride, considered by some to be one of the seven deadly sins, was being celebrated. Or it might be because those who party here openly defied one of society's biggest taboos.

Whatever the reason, there was a cocksure strut in the men, most of whom appear to visit the gym regularly.

Inside the chainlink fortress at Washington Avenue and Broad Street, where live bands played and cracked concrete became a dance floor, the strut was everywhere. So were expressive T-shirts. Some are attention-grabbers, like the one in rainbow letters that reads, "My Mom Says I'm Spectal," or, "It's Not Easy Being Easy."

Some sights at the festival, which drew more than 20,000 revelers, were gawk-worthily — like the 6-foot-tall muscular girl in a black leather vest and mini skirt, fishnet stockings and short purple hair. She was standing with one thigh-high leather boot on a bench, checking her face, which was bejeweled with silver piercings, in a com-

partment mirror.

If nothing else, a festival celebrating those who live outside the traditions of the majority could offer one new way to look at things — even beauty.

But beauty existed there in the traditional sense, too, if two slim, athletic, 20-ish girls dressed in just enough fabric to abide by city nudily regulations counted as traditionally beautiful. When they locked lips in a forceful kiss, tradition was reminded just what is being celebrated here.

It wasn't all about sex and beauty, though. The organizers of Mountain Meadow, a non-profit that provides a variety of programs for non-traditional families, offered cool shade for weary parents like Pacheco.

Mountain Meadow offers summer camp for the children of gay, lesbian and transgender parents. Pacheco works at Mountain Meadow, and she relies on such organizations to help her guide her children through what, in many ways, is a new way of growing up. Pacheco said she hopes

the decision to let the world see her as she sees herself will empower her two girls, ages 9 and 10, to do the same.

"Know Thyself" was another T-shirt motto on display, and speaking with any homosexual about their decision to be proud of their sexual orientation invariably brings up the subject of self-knowledge.

For Pacheco's daughters, "coming out" was not about their own decisions but about those of their mother. Pacheco said she worries about the way other kids will treat her daughters, who are "different" because of decisions their mother made. Julia will turn 11 in two weeks. She wrinkled her nose at questions from a nosy stranger, but it was clear she loves her mom, no matter what.

Julia did say she felt different than other kids, but she couldn't decide if that was good or bad. As for others treating her differently, there was one. "My one friend made fun of me but he's not my friend anymore," she said, demonstrating a very traditional method of making friends.