

PrideDay 2007: The proudest of all

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LOUD AND PROUD: Democratic mayoral candidate Michael Nutter, flanked by Carrie Jacobs, Micah Mahjoubian and other community leaders, wowed the crowd June 10 at the annual PrideFest at Penn's Landing. Photo: Jason Smith

Thousands of GLBT Philadelphians gathered last week to celebrate their history and culture, see unique entertainment and connect with community organizations in the City of Brotherly Love and Sisterly Affection.

The 19th annual PrideDay, organized by Philly Pride Presents, was held from noon-6 p.m. June 10.

"This was the best PrideDay in 19 years," said Philly Pride Presents executive director Franny Price. "Everyone was happy, the weather was beautiful and it was a fun, festive day."

Although PPP had not yet tabulated total ticket sales, Price estimated that about 10,000 people attended this year's event, raising around \$100,000.

"PrideDay doesn't really make a lot of money," Price explained. "Because the event is held at Penn's Landing, there are a lot of rental and insurance expenses. But the money we do raise goes to OutFest in October, which is admission-free."

Grand marshals Perry Monastero and Dona Henderson, a representative for Philadelphia Black Gay Pride, presided over the parade along with Friend of Pride Judy Applebaum, youth marshals Terrell Palmer and Amanda Rosado and Miss Philly Gay Pride Siera Spaulding.

Renowned community members Henri David and Edie Huggins hosted PrideDay entertainment, which included performances by headlining comedian Brett Butler, special speaker Sally Starr, all-girl rock band Betty, The Fusion Dance Team and the Philadelphia Gay Men's Chorus.

“People really seemed to enjoy the entertainment, and it was wonderful to have Brett Butler there. She was laid-back and the audience loved her,” said Price.

Over 130 vendors participated in PrideDay, Price said.

“I think it’s safe to say that at least 90 of the vendors were community organizations doing outreach,” she said. “Almost every other pride event has mostly craft vendors, but ours really focuses on bettering the community — it’s one of the biggest networking events on the East Coast.”

Price said protesters from Repent America, a local anti-GLBT evangelical group, were present at the event.

“There were protesters at several parade locations, but there were no real conflicts,” Price said. “We’re lucky that our community is not a violent or destructive one.”

After seeing Repent America’s protest signs, several young members of Mountain Meadow, a local organization dedicated to children of GLBT families, wanted to confront the group.

“We were marching in the parade and we got to a corner with protesters,” said program director Randi Sherman. “One of our youths, a 12-year-old girl, saw the signs and started crying. We explained to her that they just didn’t understand how wonderful our families are.”

Sherman said later at the festival, the girl wanted to speak to the protesters.

“We came up with a message, ‘God doesn’t make mistakes, and it’s not a mistake that he made my family.’ We walked over to the protesters with a few other youths and I tapped one of the leaders on the shoulder and said one of our youths wanted to talk to him.”

Sherman said Mountain Meadow youths relayed their message and told the protester they didn’t like what he was saying and that it wasn’t nice to call people names.

“He listened and spoke to them in an appropriate way. I think he was surprised by how articulate and intuitive they were. They were able to counter his points before he even got them out. They walked away feeling very empowered and proud. I think everyone was amazed by their courage — it took a lot.”

Democratic mayoral candidate Michael Nutter also made an appearance at PrideDay.

“It was great having him there,” Price said. “We’re happy when any politician shows up to support us, but he was very well accepted. We hope it’s the beginning of a beautiful relationship between Philadelphia’s GLBT community and the next mayor.”

Melanie Johnson, Nutter’s communications director, told PGN that the mayoral candidate enjoyed himself at PrideDay.

“Michael had an incredible time at the festival this past weekend and thanks all of the organizers for inviting him to participate.”