



Greater Palm Springs Pride

NEWS RELEASE

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Community Grand Marshals Announced for 27th Annual Palm Springs Pride Celebration

(Palm Springs, CA – July 23, 2013) The 2013 Community Grand Marshals for the 27th annual Greater Palm Springs Pride Parade are Melanie Jones, Ellen Zimmerman, Mark Jones and Brian Vatcher. The Community Grand Marshals are recognized for their positive and lasting impact on our community. The parade is scheduled for 10:00 am, Sunday, November 3rd, along Palm Canyon Drive through the heart of Downtown Palm Springs.

Community Grand Marshals **Melanie Jones and Ellen Zimmerman** have been active in the LGBT community for decades and are credited for their efforts to bring women together to express themselves through various social networking opportunities and creating community in the Coachella Valley. From volunteering and working in the LGBT arena Melanie and Ellen serve active roles in the community.

A native of Los Angeles, **Melanie Jones** was raised in the LGBT village as a child. She became a gay activist at a very young age and from the moment she marched in her very first 1980 San Francisco Pride Parade she knew that her mission was to become a leader in the gay world.

Their history of volunteerism includes Melanie leading various groups including lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender conversation groups and Ellen's facilitating Coming Out & transgender groups, as well as, Lesbian Chat and pro bono counseling.

A native New Yorker who has called California home for over fifty years, **Ellen Zimmerman** takes great pride in our community and has volunteered as an ambassador at the Palm Springs Chamber of Commerce and has been a part of the Rotary Club. Additionally, she has volunteered for Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center's AIDS Ride, Desert Senior Samaritans, Palm Springs Opera Guild, the Coachella Valley Symphony, Desert Regional Hospital and Desert AIDS Project.



Ellen Zimmerman and Melanie Jones.

Together they own and manage an online publication and directory providing women information about lesbian friendly events, groups, clubs, and businesses. They also organize a broad range of lesbian friendly cultural, sporting and social events for women.

Community Grand Marshals **Mark Jones and Brian Vatcher** developed and spearheaded the concept of bringing *Forever Marilyn* to Palm Springs and they can frequently be seen contributing to the community through a variety of volunteer activities. Together they manage the Tuesday Nite Social Club, which has

allowed them to share their talent with the Desert AIDS Project (D.A.P.) co-producing events kicking off and/or wrapping up D.A.P.'s Dining Out For Life, or organizing one of the top group fundraising teams for the Desert AIDS Walk. They also volunteer as hosts and ambassadors for Dining Out For Life.

Mark co-producers "Sparkle: An All-Star Holiday Concert", a fundraiser for the Desert AIDS Project and he has served on the board of directors for the Desert Business Association as its events chairperson. Mark and Brian have also served on the host committee of numerous charity events including The Red Dress Party for the LGBT Center of the Desert and for three consecutive years, they've been on the host committee for D.A.P.'s MidSummer Dance Party. They have also donated their time as judges in numerous community events including the Mr. DiGS Bar Leather Competition and the annual Halloween costume contest at the former Rainbow Bar & Grill.

As business partners Mark and Brian own a downtown Palm Springs public relations and marketing strategy firm. They developed the proposal to bring *Forever Marilyn* to Palm Springs, complete with timing, costs and a proposed calendar of events including community events, concerts and a summer film series. They then pitched the proposal to Palm Springs City Councilmember Paul Lewin. He embraced the vision and brought the proposal to P.S. Resorts to get their initial reaction, which was overwhelmingly positive. Mark and Brian facilitated negotiations between PS Resorts and the Sculpture Foundation until a rental agreement was in place and the highly visible Forever Marilyn project became a reality.



Brian Vatcher and Mark Jones standing with a section of Seward Johnson's *Forever Marilyn* sculpture.

Greater Palm Springs Pride also announced today that it will release the names of the 2013 Grand Marshal, National Grand Marshal, and Celebrity Grand Marshal in the coming weeks.

The Grand Marshals will be recognized in the Pride parade and at the prestigious Pride Honors Awards ceremony on October 4, at the Hyatt Palm Springs.

PRIDE HONORS AWARDS October 4, 2013 (6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.)

The prestigious Palm Springs Pride Honors Awards are presented annually to individuals to honor the work they have put into furthering the causes of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals and their allies. The awards reception will take place October 4, 2013, 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm at the Hyatt Palm Springs located at 285 N. Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs. Tickets are available online at bit.ly/honor2013. Proceeds from the reception will go to the Pride LGBT Landmark Monument Fund to establish a Wall of Honor landmark monument to honor and remember important local LGBT community members.

ABOUT GREATER PALM SPRINGS PRIDE

Greater Palm Springs Pride (pspride.org) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit community enhancement organization founded to promote the public education and public awareness of individual rights and civil liberties of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and to promote the history, diversity and future prosperity of the Greater Palm Springs LGBT community. "It's Time" is this year's Pride celebration theme. For information about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities visit the web site at: PSpride.org. The 2013 Palm Springs Pride Celebration is November 1 - 3.

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