



Greater Palm Springs Pride

NEWS RELEASE

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Greater Palm Springs Pride Announces 2012 Pride Honorees

Troy Perry, Viola Johnson, Ruth Debra

Mason Davis, Gary Moline, Dean McDowell and the Desert Winds Freedom Band to be honored

PALM SPRINGS (September 10, 2012) Greater Palm Springs Pride announced today that it will bestow its annual Pride Honors on the founder of Metropolitan Community Church, a leather community leader and activist, a life-long feminist, community activists, volunteers and an organization that has provide care, prevention and advocacy for twenty-five years in Palm Springs.

The prestigious Pride Honors Awards are presented annually to individuals in order to honor the work they have put into furthering the causes of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals and their allies. The awards will be presented at a ceremony on November 2, at the Hyatt Regency Suites in Palm Springs.

Lifetime Achievement Awards will be presented to the LGBT rights pioneer and founder of Metropolitan Community Church, Troy Perry, and Viola Johnson, recognizing her four decades of activism and leadership in the leather community. Masen Davis will be recognized as 2012 Spirit of Stonewall Special Guest for his activism and service on behalf of the transgender community; and a life-long feminist and activist, Ruth Debra, along with trio Gary Moline, Dean McDowell and the Desert Winds Freedom Band will be recognized with Spirit of Stonewall Community Service Awards. AIDS Walk Palm Springs is the 2012 Advocate of the Year and Arlene Rosenthal, Doug Hairgrove and Woody Wood will be honored as Volunteers of the Year.

The Lifetime Achievement Award is presented to recognize an individual whose lifetime body of work has left a lasting major imprint on the LGBT community. The 2012 recipients are Viola Johnson and Troy Perry.

Viola M. Johnson is a leatherwoman recognized for serving as an activist, educator, writer, motivational speaker and author in and for the Leather community for four decades.

Viola is passionately involved with preserving the history of the SM/Leather/Fetish communities, serving as the director and senior griot for the Carter/Johnson Library and Collection, a traveling



Viola Johnson

Greater Palm Springs Pride

777 N. Palm Canyon Dr., Ste 102, Palm Springs, CA 92262

library designed to bring history to the communities it serves.

An advocate for the protection of individual rights and equality she says, “I never set out to be an activist. All I wanted was to right a few wrongs that made me angry.” She has served as a mentor to countless individuals, and was dubbed "Mom" by several generations of leathermen and women. She is delighted to now be “Grandmom” to a whole new generation.

She has stood against prejudice and defending the community from hatred for decades. Her fight to protect the community is rooted in a core belief that, “The essence of love does not change because the gender of love may be problematic to some.” Her life is dedicated to preserving our history and making sure the next generation knows they are not alone and that their voices will not be silenced.

In addition, Johnson has received numerous honors for her work, including Lifetime Achievement Awards from Pantheon of Leather, the National Leather Association, and Black Beat. She is the author of two books, *Dhampir: Child of the Blood* and *To Love, To Obey, To Serve: Diary of an Old Guard Slave*. She is the wife of Jill Carter, International Ms. Leather 1996.

Troy Perry has devoted his life to helping others discover the loving and caring God to whom he has committed his life. As founder of the predominantly - gay Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC), he has watched the membership grow from 12 to over 43,000 since 1968 and has guided MCC's growth into one of the world's largest LGBT organizations.

MCC was the first church to recognize the need to minister to the needs of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons throughout the world. It is through that ministry that Perry has become a leading activist for gay and lesbian rights.

Perry's journey to becoming the founder of the UFMCC was preceded by an “uneasy” coming out. He was stripped of a religious position because of his homosexuality, became estranged from his two sons and attempted suicide. He lost hope that he could reconcile his homosexuality with his faith. The seemingly homophobic arrest of a friend convinced Perry to start a church providing spiritual support to the gay community.

Rev. Perry was invited to the White House in 1977 by the administration of President Jimmy Carter to discuss gay and lesbian civil rights, and was appointed by President Bill Clinton as an official delegate to White House Conference on Hate Crimes and the White House Conference on AIDS.

Rev. Perry has been an international leader in the quest for marriage equality for gays and lesbians. In 1969, he performed the first public same-sex wedding in the U.S. and in 1970 he filed the first-ever lawsuit seeking legal recognition for same-gender marriages.



Rev. Troy Perry



Masen Davis

The Special Guest Award is bestowed on individuals who have enriched our lives through activism, inspiration, philanthropy or arts and culture. **Masen Davis** is recognized as the 2012 Spirit of Stonewall Special Guest for activism and service on behalf of the transgender community. An LGBT activist for twenty-two years, Masen is currently the executive director of the Transgender Law Center, a civil rights organization advocating for transgender communities. Under Masen’s leadership, the Transgender Law Center has won significant legal and policy victories helping thousands of transgender people claim and uphold their fundamental civil rights, including a landmark ruling that transgender people are covered by Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act; leveraged over \$1 million of public funds for transgender employment programs; and launched innovative programs promoting economic empowerment, healthcare access and leadership development.

The Spirit of Stonewall Community Service Award recognizes individuals, a couple or organization within the LGBT community that has made a noticeable and positive impact on the community. The 2012 recipients are Ruth Debra and the trio Gary Moline, Dean McDowell and the Desert Winds Freedom Band.



Ruth Debra

Ruth Debra defines herself as a radical Old (67) Lesbian feminist who moved to Palm Springs in 2003 with her spouse Sherry Fulton. Ruth has served on the Board of Directors for numerous organizations including the Pride Center, the Golden Rainbow Center (now the LGBT Community Center of the Desert) and Greater Palm Springs Pride. She is very active in politics and serves as the Chair of Desert Stonewall Democrats. She is also a member of the National Steering Committee for Old Lesbians Organizing for Change (OLOC) and has started and facilitates a Coachella Valley group of Old Lesbians. She also volunteers with Equality California and has been active in the marriage equality movement, marrying Sherry on October 11, 2008 (National Coming Out Day) during the brief window of legality in our state. Ruth’s service to the community includes being a founding member of Desert Women for Equality where she volunteers in the “We Care” free mammogram program.



Desert Winds Freedom Band

Desert Winds Freedom Band is recognized for promoting civic pride, gay pride, and leadership through music as the only openly gay band in the Coachella Valley. Founded in 2001 by Gary Moline the band holds three concerts a year under the baton of Maestro Dean McDowell and is guided by its board of directors with Bob Montooth serving as board president.

The Desert Winds Freedom Band is a diverse group open to all gay and gay-friendly people who like to play concert and jazz band music while supporting the bands LGBT community outreach. The band has grown from seven to sixty dedicated musicians, many of whom played in gay bands in cities from throughout the

United States prior to moving to the Coachella Valley. Some of the bands musicians are professionals and others have dusted off their high school instruments to play in a LGBT band.

The band is a staple in the community bringing music as advocacy to civic events such as the Desert Aids Project's annual AIDS Walk, the Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast, Desert Hot Springs Festival of the Waters, the Rainbow Festival of Flags, and other events, such as Celebrate Our Diversity.

Gary Moline founded Desert Winds Freedom Band in 2001 to provide a creative outlet and opportunity for local musicians in our community. Gary was a charter member of the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Marching Band and Twirling Corps--the first openly gay music group in the world. He has served in various capacities with the band and helped the band grow from an initial group of seven musicians to the well-respected community concert band with nearly sixty musicians that performs today. Gary has given countless hours per week to promote the band in which he is still active. He has also served as a board member of the international association of gay bands, Lesbian Gay Band Association (LGBA) and Greater Palm Springs Pride.



Gary Moline

Gary and his husband Larry Chew have lived in the Coachella Valley since 2000.

Dean McDowell has conducted the Desert Winds Freedom Band since 2007. Under his artistic direction, the band has flourished and grown into a highly esteemed, openly LGBT and LGBT-friendly musical group for the Coachella Valley. Dean initiated the Desert Winds Jazz Ensemble and maintains visibility with performances as the only openly gay marching band in the Greater Palm Springs Pride Parade, the Aids Walk and the Tour de Palm Springs.



Dean McDowell

The band annually performs at the Annenberg Theatre for Holiday Concerts, the Palm Springs High School for spring concerts and the Rancho Mirage Library for a summer concert series.

Dean McDowell and his husband Bob Montooth moved from Columbus, Ohio to the Coachella Valley in 2006.



The Spirit of Stonewall Advocate of the Year Award acknowledges outstanding persons, organizations, events, or businesses working to make a difference in the community through advocacy or service. **AIDS Walk Palm Springs** is the 2012 Spirit of Stonewall Advocate of the Year recognized by Palm Springs Pride for their work to fight the epidemic in Palm Springs and provide care, advocacy, prevention and love for those affected by HIV/AIDS.

Betty Ford and Anne and Kirk Douglas chaired the very first walk and that year, the U.S. reported a total of 100,000 AIDS diagnoses. Today, about 1.1 million American citizens are living with HIV, of

the more than 34.2 million around the world. Supporters of the Palm Springs AIDS Walk have raised nearly \$6.25 million through individual walkers who secure donation pledges from friends and family, as well as through significant sponsorships from community partnerships.

To raise awareness and honor the AIDS Walk legacy of care, advocacy and prevention, walk supporters will make history as they join the Palm Springs Pride parade and walk the rainbow mile along Palm Canyon Drive.

The Spirit of Stonewall Volunteer of the Year Award recognizes individuals for outstanding contributions to the betterment of our community through their volunteer efforts. Recognized as 2012 Volunteers of the Year are Arlene Rosenthal, Doug Hairgrove and Warren “Woody” Wood.

As a child, **Arlene Rosenthal’s** parents taught her the value of community action and interaction and that we have an obligation to help make things better in the world in which we live. She came to the desert in 1973 and has lived up to the community service values of her parents always finding herself involved in social change and working in organizations where she could be a voice for those who were unable to advocate for themselves.

Her community involvement includes service as a director on the board of directors for Mizell Senior Center, Palm Springs Chamber of Commerce, Aids Assistance Program, OperaArts, and Well in the Desert. She has served eighteen years with the Palm Springs Opera Guild and sixteen years with the Museum Associates Council at the Palm Springs Art Museum.



Arlene Rosenthal

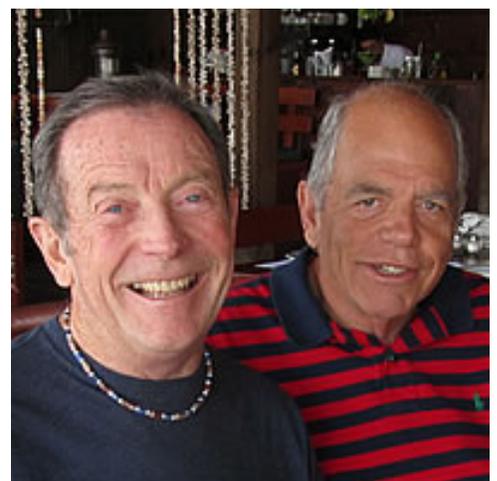
In addition to board service, Arlene has created events and raised funds for a variety of organizations including the Stroke Recovery Center, Barbara Sinatra Children’s Center, Animals Samaritans, and the Mizell Senior Center.

Her volunteer spirit never stops and includes chairing the Palm Springs Athena Awards for nine years and the Indian Wells Athena Committee for five years. She ran the Vocal Competition of the Palm Springs Opera Guild for eighteen years, and created and produced Opera in the Park. Working with other opera aficionados she was part of the team that created Opera Arts, and the Festival of Opera and Art which is now in its fourth year.

Arlene has been with her life partner for forty-four years.

Doug Hairgrove and Warren “Woody” Wood fell in love during their senior year at the University of Redlands and married in California in 2008 after a forty-seven year "engagement". Teachers for thirty years, Doug and Woody are recognized for their service and volunteerism in the community and their commitment to the region’s youth.

In 2012, Woody and Doug were instrumental in planning and presenting the desert-wide Rainbow Youth Summit for GSA members and advisors and the Pride Prom for GSA students and their friends from across the Coachella Valley and Yucca Valley.



*Doug Hairgrove and
Warren “Woody” Wood*

Doug is a founding member and current president of Safe Schools Palm Springs/Desert Communities, which works with district administrators and school sites to ensure that state and federal laws protecting students from bullying and harassment are enforced. Woody is also a member of the Safe Schools Board of Directors.

The couple often travels to high schools across the Coachella Valley and the high desert to meet with Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs and advisors. In addition, Doug volunteers as a speaker for Equality California (EQCA), telling the couple's story and relating the current state of affairs for LGBT students in public schools.

Woody is president of the Vista Norte Neighborhood Organization in Palm Springs and both were founders of the group. Doug serves on the Palm Springs Police Department Outreach Committee to the LGBT community and he is an active member of Parents, Families, & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG).

Doug and Woody have called Palm Springs home since 2003.

PRIDE HONORS AWARDS November 2 (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 November 2, 2012, 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm at the Hyatt Regency Suites in Palm Springs located at 285 N. Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs. Admission is \$15. For tickets visit bit.ly/honor2012.

ABOUT GREATER PALM SPRINGS PRIDE

The Greater Palm Springs Pride organization (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.

For twenty-six years, Palm Springs Pride has been a tireless advocate for equality and diversity. This year's Pride celebration theme is: "Long May it Wave!" For information about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities visit the web site at: PSPride.org. The 2012 Palm Springs Pride Celebration is November 1 - 4.

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