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Local News

Festival is a matter of pride

Awareness-promoting event features food, music -- and political activism

10/13/02

By [LEAH ETLING-STENTZEL](#)

NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

Santa Barbara's Gay Pride Festival Saturday was a rocking, awareness-promoting success with around 5,000 visitors, twice the number who came last year.



They came to De la Guerra Plaza for food, music, camaraderie and politics, with an emphasis on the theme "be yourself, change the world," aimed at gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered and heterosexual peoples alike. Known as "Pride at the Beach" in the 1990s, the festival has been organized by the Gay Santa Barbara Foundation for the last two years.

"We are here because we want our voices to be heard, and we have been able to send that message to our governor," said Nicole Curran of Gov. Gray Davis' office.

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Photo Gallery

She presented organizer Charles Rice with a letter of commendation from the governor for his work on the event.

The festival occurred just days after Trev Broudy returned to the Santa Barbara area to complete his recovery from a brutal baseball-bat attack in West Hollywood last month.

He says he was beaten because he is gay, and a Los Angeles prosecutor's decision not to charge his alleged attackers with a hate crime has drawn heavy criticism.

Charles Rice, coordinator of the event and director of the Gay Santa Barbara Foundation, said that Mr. Broudy's attack was very much on people's minds.

"We are all very concerned," Mr. Rice said.

Encouraging involvement in political issues were representatives from the Human Rights Campaign, a lobbyist organization that grades politicians on their friendliness towards gay civil rights.

Dudley Kirkpatrick, an HRC volunteer, said the most pressing political issues facing gays are passing legislation to stop hate crimes, allowing adoption rights for unmarried couples, and eliminating discrimination in the workplace.

"Many members of Congress feel hate crimes legislation is redundant because they feel those protections are already in existence under our laws," said Mr. Kirkpatrick.

But cases like Mr. Broudy's and the fatal burning of a Santa Barbara man earlier this year, allegedly because he was gay, indicate otherwise, Mr. Kirkpatrick said.

The HRC has expressed deep concern over the district attorney's decision.

For members of UCSB's Queer Student Union, the day capped a series of events celebrating National Coming Out Day, which took place Friday.

The group had 20 volunteers helping out and raising funds for on-campus projects.

"I think this is a really important event because the Santa Barbara community is such a small community and so conservative in many ways," said Brandon Marich, a fourth-year UCSB student and co-coordinator of the QSU.

Mr. Marich was attending his first Santa Barbara Pride Festival since coming out last year.

He said that political activism is common among those who have recently revealed their sexuality.

"They've built up so much aggravation towards roles that society has made them play," Mr. Marich said of the politically active. "They want to break those roles down for others."

