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2017 SPIRIT OF STONEWALL AWARDS

Every year, San Diego Pride accepts nominations from the community for the annual presentation of the Spirit of Stonewall Awards. The awards recognize individuals or groups who contribute significantly to the LGBT community through their leadership, activism, and fundraising efforts.

San Diego Pride is honored to recognize the following individuals and organizations as our 2017 awardees:

AWARD: CHAMPION OF PRIDE

Dr. Delores Jacobs

An individual who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in the LGBT community over an extended period of years and/or has made an exceptional contribution in the past year.

Bio:

Well-known and respected for her commitment to creating innovative collaborations between a variety of sectors, Dr. Jacobs is looked to as a strong voice and committed partner for social justice issues. Her passion for honoring intersectionality helps address issues like HIV/AIDS, LGBT equality, safe schools, racial justice, immigration reform, access to health care and more. She also played a leading role in the fight for marriage equality at the local and state levels.

Dr. Jacobs first joined the San Diego LGBT Community Center part-time in 1998, following her successful career in academia and in private practice as a clinician and research consultant. She served as the director of The Center’s Behavioral Health Services before being selected as its chief executive officer in 2001.

With over 16 years of exemplary vision, leadership and commitment, Dr. Jacobs has increased and enhanced The Center’s scope of services, its community collaborations and its influence within the larger San Diego community. Since Dr. Jacobs joined The Center, it has grown from a $2 million dollar into a $6 million dollar organization with more than 55 staff members and 1,200 volunteers.

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AWARD: COMMUNITY GRAND MARSHAL

Susan Jester

An individual who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in the LGBT community over an extended period of years with consideration to service to San Diego Pride.

Bio:

Susan Jester is a third generation Californian who grew up in Palm Springs and was raised in a strict evangelical home. Susan struggled with her sexuality until finally coming out at age 40 in 1983. Susan quickly immersed herself into LGBT rights issues, becoming a well-known lesbian activist, speaking frequently with other LGBT leaders at press conferences, debates, and LGBT rights demonstrations. In 1984, Susan created the first LGBT Police Liaison Committee and was the first openly gay person appointed as a San Diego City Commissioner.

When the HIV/AIDS epidemic struck the gay community in the early 80’s, Susan used her political experience to raise public awareness by mobilizing the LGBT community and its allies to produce the first San Diego AIDS Walk in 1986. Susan has been a fierce warrior and voice for all affected by the virus in San Diego and across the country. Susan moved to the east coast in 1991 to work for the Human Rights Campaign. In 1994 she was the Executive Director of New York City’s “Stonewall 25,” an international march celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, when over two million people marched past the United Nations Headquarters and into Central Park for AIDS/LGBT rights.

She also served New Jersey Governor Whitman at the New Jersey Affordable housing agency, which created housing programs for HIV-affected families. Susan returned to San Diego in 2011, and served on the Board of San Diego Pride, The San Diego Sheriffs LGBT Advisory Council, The AIDS Memorial Task Force, the California Advisory Committee to the United States Civil Rights Commission, the San Diego City Citizens Equal Opportunity Commission, and as the Co-Chair of the Mayor’s LGBT Advisory Council. As a result of all of her efforts, Susan was inducted into the San Diego Center “Wall of Honor” in 2014.

Susan currently works with St. Paul’s Episcopal Cathedral as their public relations and media director. She is also the City Commissioner of the Citizens Equal Opportunity Commission (CEOC), the Co-Chair on the Mayor’s LGBT Advisory Council, a member of the Sheriff’s LGBT Advisory Council, the San Diego AIDS Memorial Task Force, and the CA Advisory Committee to the U.S, Civil Rights Commission

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AWARD: COMMUNITY GRAND MARSHAL

Russell Roybal

An individual who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in the LGBT community over an extended periods of years with consideration to service to San Diego Pride.

Bio:

Russell Roybal is a noted fund-raiser and LGBTQ movement leader. He worked with the Gill Foundation for over six years and served as the director of training and capacity building, teaching thousands of LGBTQ and allied activists and leaders, around the country, how to resource their organizations. Russell also served on the staffs of the National Latina/o LGBT Organization, the San Diego LGBT Center, and San Diego Pride. He attended San Diego State University where he majored in Chicana/o Studies and was active on campus and in the local LGBTQ and Chicana/o communities. He is also a graduate of the Chicano Federation of San Diego County’s Leadership Institute.

He has served in various leadership capacities for several nonprofit organizations, both locally and nationally. He has served as chair of the Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training, and as a board member of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, Gay and Lesbian Latinos con Orgullo, and the Imperial Court in San Diego. Russell now serves on the board of the International Imperial Court System.

Russell is the recipient of numerous awards including the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) first-ever Equality Award. He was also recently named a 2017 Pride Honoree by the CA LGBT Legislative Caucus.

Currently, Russell Roybal is the National LGBTQ Task Force’s Deputy Executive Director, where he manages the organization’s day-to-day operations. He also directs the organization’s policy and programmatic work, including the National Conference on LGBT Equality: Creating Change. Founded in 1973, The Task Force advances full freedom, justice and equality for LGBTQ people and is the country’s oldest national LGBTQ advocacy organization.

His activism is rooted in his family’s tradition of public service and pursuit of social justice. Russell grew up in La Puente, CA, but his chosen home is San Diego. He currently resides in Washington, DC. Later this summer Russell will return to the Golden State to serve in a senior leadership role at the San Francisco Aids Foundation.

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AWARD: STONEWALL SERVICE AWARD

San Diego Gay Men’s Chorus

A group or organization which may or may not identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, but which has stalwartly supported the LGBT community over an extended period of years and/or has made an exceptional contribution in the past year.

Bio:

With more than 250 members, the San Diego Gay Men’s Chorus is packed full of singers on a mission to change lives one voice at a time. Founded 32 years ago during the AIDS crisis and rampant discrimination, the volunteer singers have always stood loud and proud, embracing the positive power of music to change hearts and minds.

Today, the Chorus has sung at the White House, the Super Bowl and most every venue in San Diego from Petco Park’s center field to the Mayor’s inauguration. Just weeks ago, SDGMCs acclaimed Chamber Chorale made its Lincoln Center debut, bringing to the world’s most famous stage the ant-bullying message of gay music student Tyler Clementi in Tyler’s Suite.

The San Diego Union-tribune hailed SDGMC as “San Diego’s gay ambassadors” on its front page, acknowledging the group’s bridge-building successes. The Greater San Diego Business Association named the Chorus as Non-Profit of the Year for 2016, the CityBeat Magazine named SDGMC “Best Performing Arts Group” in San Diego 2016.

During the past year, in partnership with the San Diego Padres, the Chorus helped more than 800 LGBBT youth attend its concerts for free. The singers partnered with the California Youth Conservatory theatre in its production of Billy Elliot – the Musical. Currently underway is the musical version of children’s book a Peacock Among Pigeons, about celebrating what makes us stand out in the crowd with an anti-bullying message of special relevance to LGBT youth.

SDGMC is committed to serving its community even beyond its music. Most recently, it partnered with the Tijuana AIDS hospice to gather and deliver “wish List” supplies, conducted a food drive to Mama’s kitchen and helped local Wounded Warriors families sit down to a festive Christmas dinner. The Chorus has also partnered with Rady Children’s Hospital Gender Management Clinic, the Veterans Village of San Diego, and the Boys and Girls Clubs.

This summer, Sycuan Casino presents SDGMC’s blockbuster show Divas at the Balboa Theatre.

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AWARD: INSPIRATIONAL COUPLE

Ernie Castro and Mike J. Goupill

A couple whose love and commitment embodies the humanity of our community.

Bio:

In 1987, Mike Goupill and Ernie Castro vowed to do all they could to help those affected by and infected with the HIV/AIDS virus. They have been partners for 42 years and have been legally married for nine years. They have been working in California with community groups such as Being Alive and Fraternity House Inc. since 1990. They have also facilitated support groups for people infected with and affected by AIDS at the Escondido Community Clinic.

In 2012, Mike and Ernie received the AIDS Warrior Award for their work with the AIDS Community in San Diego. They continue to volunteer regularly with Fraternity House Inc., which is a hospice-like home located in Escondido, where low-income men and women disabled by HIV/AIDS receive comprehensive care and services.

Both Mike, a former Fly Test Manager for Grumman Aerospace in New York, and Ernie, a former HIV/AIDS Nurse Educator, are now retired and remain busy as active volunteers at Fraternity House Inc., at Public Access Television by Elders (PACE-TV), and at the House of Puerto Rico in Balboa Park. Ernie’s focus is on education and prevention geared towards staff and patients at the Veterans Hospital, with an emphasis on and involvement in the AIDS Community. He also provides meals and medical supervision at the Fraternity House Inc. homes. Mike is now involved with management and support of residents at Fraternity House Inc. and assists the residents in shopping and transportation.

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AWARD: INSPIRATIONAL COUPLE

Meredith Vezina and Ellen Holzman

A couple whose love and commitment embodies the humanity of our community.

Bio:

Meredith Vezina and Ellen Holzman have been a couple since 1992 and were legally married in 2013. Meredith also became a publicly visible trans woman in 2013, and the couple has since promoted transgender visibility, primarily through events and videography.

Meredith became active in the transgender community in the 1980s as a volunteer for the Lambda Archives of San Diego. In 1993, she became the first paid director of the Greater San Diego Business Association and advocated for the organization to openly identify as the Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce.

Since 2014, Meredith and Ellen have focused on their campaign for trans visibility and respect by being part of the committee that organized the first Trans March and Rally, founding Trans Oral history Project and the transgender collection for the Lambda Archives. In 2015, they founded Trans Narratives to document and affirm the lives of local trans people and local trans history. They also worked with LGBT Weekly to adopt a policy banning hate speech and personal attacks from its comment pages.

In 2016, they insisted that the city of San Diego include trans history in its San Diego Citywide LGBTQ Historic Context Statement and provided information on trans history dating back to 1936 that is now a part of that document. They also helped the LGBT Center include trans people in the video campaign for an LGBT-affirming housing project. This year, they have joined the organizing committee for the local LGBTQ Equality March held in June of 2017.

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AWARD: FRIEND OF PRIDE

Kathie Moehlig

An individual who does not identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, but who has stalwartly supported the LGBT community over an extended period of years and/or has made an exceptional contribution in the past year.

Bio:

For over 30 years, Kathie Moehlig has been a public speaker, workshop presenter, nonprofit development professional, and support group leader. She is a certified life coach, an ordained minister, and a certified parenting instructor.

In early 2015, Kathie founded TransFamily Support Services, a nonprofit organization in San Diego serving transgender and gender nonconforming youth and their families. During her transgender son’s transition, she utilized her professional talents to advocate for him and to help navigate his journey through the healthcare system. As a result of her own family’s experience, she committed herself to helping other families find successes in their journeys.

Through her work with TransFamily Support Services, Kathie provides individual and family coaching to facilitate acceptance and support, assists with healthcare and insurance issues, helps families navigate the legal system, and advocates for resources and support at schools for transgender and gender nonconforming youth and their families. Additionally, she provides workshops and training programs for faculty and staff in schools, covering subjects such as LGBTQ awareness, vocabulary use, understanding and implementing state and federal laws, and how to adopt best practices.

Kathie tirelessly advocates for transgender acceptance in multiple communities. She currently serves as a board member of PFLAG, GLSEN, and Camp Laurel and is a San Diego Trevor Project Ambassador. Kathie also regularly collaborates with the North County LGBT Center, the LGBT Center in Hillcrest, and many other organizations nationwide who serve transgender youth.

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AWARD: FRIEND OF PRIDE

Zachary Schlagel

An individual who does not identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, but who has stalwartly supported the LGBT community over an extended period of years and/or has made an exceptional contribution in the past year.

Bio:

Zachary Schlagel has been a true ally and friend of Pride. As Assistant Director of Government and Community Affairs for UC San Diego Health, he has fully dedicated himself to the LGBT community and to the goal of equality for all.

Through Zach’s efforts, UC San Diego Health Equality Index “Leader” designation from the Human Rights Campaign in 2011 and his continued to do so every year. He personally rewrote UCSD Health’s patient bill of rights as well as the visitation and admissions policies to make them more accessible to the LGBT community.

Zach spearheaded the first-ever hospital sponsorship of the San Diego Pride Parade and Festival in 2011. As the Team Captain, he helps bring over a hundred employees – including the UCSD Health CEO – to participate in the Parade. He also ensures that the Festival includes free HIV/AIDS screening every year at their tent.

In 2015, Zach developed the Pride Lighting Ceremony at UC San Diego Health. The hospital is illuminated for the month of July in rainbow colors, and the annual lighting ceremony is kicked off by LGBT performers, organizations, elected officials and community leaders. This is the first and only hospital-based lighting in the nation that recognizes LGBT staff, patients, and the community. Zach has also consistently lobbied for further involvement and investment from the hospital in several key LGBT-serving organizations. As a result, the hospital contributes nearly $40K annually to these important groups.

Zach also dedicates time in his private life to the LGBT community. He served on the San Diego Pride Board of Directors from 2013 to 20-16, and he and his wife have donated to various LGBT causes. He continuously brings his family, including his two young children, to LGBT events and emphasizes empathy, inclusiveness, and pride to them at all times.

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AWARD: STONEWALL PHILANTHROPY AWARD

Harrah’s Resort Southern California

A group or organization which may or may not identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, but which has stalwartly supported the LGBT community over an extended period of years and/or has made an exceptional contribution in the past year.

Bio:

From community service and volunteer opportunities to corporate sponsorships and on-property programs, Harrah’s Resort Southern California has supported the LGBT community for more than a decade.

Harrah’s Resort SoCal’s corporate support for the LGBT community began in 2005 with sponsorship of the Macy’s Passport event, helping to raise funds for AIDS awareness programs in San Diego and Los Angeles. To continue support for AIDS awareness, in 2009 Harrah’s Resort SoCal opened up the opportunity for company teammates to join The Center’s AIDS walk, paying for entry fees for the employee and a guest. That same year, the property became one of the first resorts in the region to offer the location as a wedding site to the LGBT community.

In 2010, the property served as a sponsor fo the annual Human Rights Campaign Gala and offered financial and volunteer support for Bowling For equality. Harrah’s Resort SoCal is also a current financial supporter for the San Diego LGBT Center Casino night.

In 2012, Harrah’s Resort SoCal joined the march in the annual San Diego Pride Parade. Since then, their support has grown to sponsorship level participation, including a float and countless volunteers over the past five years by walking and supporting the event. Harrah’s Resort Southern California is proud to be an equal opportunity in many different ways.

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AWARD: COMMUNITY SERVICE

Josh Coyne

An individual who is recognized as an up-and-coming leader within the community or whose contribution to the community in the past year was of particular significance.

Bio:

Josh Coyne currently serves as the Assistant Director for Associated Students at the University of San Diego Office of Student Leadership, Involvement and Changemaking. Josh’s primary responsibilities include advising and supervising all operations of the student government.

For over four ears, Josh ahs volunteered with The Trevor Project, the leading national organization that provides crisis intervention services and suicide prevention resources for LGBTQ youth ages 13 – 24. Every week, Josh volunteers as a digital crisis counselor supporting young people across the country who are feeling alone and are often thinking about suicide. In this role, Josh works to ensure they have access to the resources they deserve.

Additionally, he ahs served as co-chair of the San Diego chapter of The Trevor Project for the past two years. Josh leads a group of 10 volunteers who coordinate fundraising efforts and community outreach events in the greater San Diego area. As co-chair of the ambassador group, Josh ensures that the San Diego area is aware of the programs and services offered by the Trevor Project for LGBTQ young people.

Josh also serves as a Youth Programs Coordinator for the San Diego LGBT Pride, where he coordinates monthly gatherings and programs for LGBTQ young people and heir allies to connect with one another in a safe place.

Before moving to San Diego, Josh graduated with a Master of Science degree in College Student Personnel Administration from Canisius College and with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Niagara University, both located in New York.

When practicing self-care, Josh enjoys a glass of wine, a magazine, and an occasional solo trip to the movie theatre.

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