

People who help :

Lambda Archives of San Diego hosts 20 Years, 20 Heroes

This Saturday, Lambda Archives of San Diego, in commemoration of its 20th anniversary, will honor 20 local leaders for their service over the last two decades.

Lambda, the GLBT community's keeper of historical records and a prime educational institution, will host 20 Years, 20 Heroes Dec. 8, at the San Diego Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center.

"We are very excited about holding our first gala benefit for Lambda Archives of San Diego and honoring 20 true leaders of our LGBT community," said Frank Nobiletti, the archives' president. "We want to highlight for all of us, and especially our young people, the extensive range of role models who are instrumental in making history every day by serving and strengthening our community, as well as all of San Diego."

"These honorees are all true role models and heroes of not only the GLBT community but also the City of San Diego," said City Commissioner Nicole Murray-Ramirez, who is on the Board of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force of Washington, D.C., and who, along with City Councilmember Toni Atkins, will co-chair the event.

Murray-Ramirez's column, "Conversations with Nicole," in the *Gay & Lesbian Times*, has paid tribute to some of these leaders throughout the years. But their accomplishments and contributions are simply too numerous to capture in a column: No one can document the hours, the phone calls, the paper work, the ingenuity and patience, the determination and cooperative spirit that these community members bring to the task of improving our community's quality of life.

For years, these local heroes have been sitting on boards, acting on committees, conducting training, establishing shelters, counseling the homeless, providing meals for people with HIV/AIDS, creating business forums and manning booths at Pride.

The Gay & Lesbian Times joins Lambda, and our entire community, in saying thank you to the people who help.

Tracie Jada O'Brien



Since surviving the mean streets of San Francisco's Tenderloin District in the 1970s as a young transgender street kid, **Tracie Jada O'Brien** has become one of the most respected and elegant role models of our community – a testament to beauty, survival and perseverance. O'Brien is a certified addictions treatment counselor and spent six years as a counselor and coordinator of Extend Services at Stepping Stone of San Diego, a nationally renowned Alcohol and Drug Treatment Facility specific to the GLBT community.

O'Brien is also the co-founder of Transaction, San Diego's first political/social/transgender group that succeeded in having cross-dressing laws in the county repealed. O'Brien is active with the San Francisco Transgender Law Center, The California Transgender Leadership Summit, The California Office of AIDS Transgender HIV Equality and Party Conferences, and the Center of Excellence for Transgender HIV Prevention. She is also the coordinator of the Family Health Center's Project S.T.A.R., which provides services for the transgender community.

Vertez Burks



Vertez Burks was another newcomer to San Diego in 1985, when she arrived to spend a summer vacation. Now, 20 years later, Burks says she still feels like it is summer vacation, but she also feels she's made a home for herself here. "I walked into The Center, behind the Brass Rail, my life has never been the same. I was welcomed with open arms," she said. Burks obviously decided to give back to the community that liberated her from "the darkness and loneliness of the closet." Because since then, she's been involved with The Names Project, Lesbian Community Cultural Arts, Lesbians and Gays of African Descent United, Pride, Life Lobby ... the list goes on. "I have tried some of the things that were on my list. I have not finished, nor have I done half of what is there, but I consider myself blessed and honored that someone noticed the little that I have done," Burks says.

Todd F. Stevens became the first openly gay president of the 110-year-old San Diego County Bar Association in 1999, the year he was named Gay Pride Man of the Year.

Stevens is a lawyer with Keeney Waite & Stevens and a regular contributor of pro bono legal services for people with HIV/AIDS, for which the California State Bar Association recognized him in 1993. Stevens serves as legal counsel for the Human Dignity Foundation and has served on the boards of the American Civil Liberties Union, the Mayor of San Diego's LGBT Advisory Board and the San Diego County Bar Foundation. His domestic partner of 16 years is San Diego Superior Court Judge David Rubin.



Todd F. Stevens

Bonnie Zimmerman came to San Diego State University in 1978 as a member of the Women's Studies Department, where she is now associate vice president for Faculty Affairs. Zimmerman is known for her work on lesbian fiction and literary theory, and for more than 30 years, she has dedicated herself to fostering the growth of women's studies and lesbian studies through research, teaching and program development. She has served on the editorial boards of five scholarly journals, published four award-winning books, and her work has been included in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Zimmerman lectures at universities across the country and in Europe and is known in San Diego for her Lesbian "Herstory" Slide Show, which she presents to campus groups and community organizations. She also developed and teaches seven courses on lesbian and gay studies at SDSU, UCSD and UCLA.



Bonnie Zimmerman

Ben Cartwright



“When I started at SDSU...there were no major GLBT events, low visibility for the community and a very homophobic atmosphere on campus. There is still so much work to do,...but we’ve seen the community grow and flourish over the years,” says Ben Cartwright. Cartwright, first honored as a Community Hero at age 16 when he carried the 1996 Olympic Torch for a half-mile stretch as it traveled from Los Angeles to Atlanta, has kept the flame alive by working with United Way Volunteer Center’s Students Actively Volunteering for You program, where he says his proudest accomplishment has been watching students get involved in the issues our community faces. Cartwright has also been active in Vagina San Diego, Dyke March San Diego, San Diego LGBT Pride, San Diego Youth Pride, SDSU’s Cross Cultural Center Advisory Board & Mission Statement Task Force and San Diego’s 2002 Rally Against Hate. He works for the Associated Students of San Diego State University and is a weekly contributing writer for the *Gay & Lesbian Times*, among other newspapers.

James Ziegler



James Ziegler is putting out fires – again. As he was in 2003, Ziegler is once more heavily involved in the recovery and rebuilding efforts necessitated by the October wildfires through his service with The San Diego Regional Disaster Task Force Board of Directors. Ziegler is also a small business owner, serves on The Board of Governors at the San Diego Foundation and on the Boards of AIDS Foundation San Diego, and The San Diego HIV Funding Collaborative. Previous community affiliations include service on the boards of The San Diego LGBT Center, Diversionary Theatre, La Mesa Chamber of Commerce, Mission Beach Precise Planning Board and the El Cajon Boulevard Businessmen’s Association.

“Economic growth and civil rights go hand in hand,” says Joyce Marieb. “Money is power, and power used for the good results in equality.” A native of Massachusetts, Marieb was loud and proud in her Boston days – working within the Civil Rights Movement, the anti-war movement and the Women’s Movement.

Marieb didn’t quit when she moved to San Diego 30 years ago. She’s now executive director of the Greater San Diego Business Association, the second largest GLBT Chamber of Commerce and the first to enter into a Community Partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration. Marieb served for 10 years on the Board of Directors of Stepping Stone, where, as president for three years, she was instrumental in the start of the building project and capital campaign, which resulted in the new, state-of-the-art \$2.5 million recovery facility. Marieb also served as vice chair of the AIDS Walk Board and the Advisory Board of the Public Affairs Department of The LGBT Center. She currently sits on Congressman Bob Filner’s LGBT Advisory Board and is chair of the Western Pacific Region of the National Lesbian and Gay Chamber of Commerce.



Joyce Marieb

City Commissioner “Julia Ashley Legaspi is one of our community’s most respected and loved personalities and activists,” wrote Nicole Murray-Ramirez in a 2004 *Gay & Lesbian Times* column. “She is a member of the Asian Pacific Islander community, a member of St. Joseph Catholic Cathedral, past member of the executive Lions Club, co-founder of APICAP, member of the Filipino American Association of North County, past member of the board of directors of The Center, Empress XX of San Diego, chair of the annual community Toys for Kids Holiday Drive, a Democrat, executive board member of the Imperial Court and a member of GLBT Vote 2004. [Plus,] Julia Legaspi is also only the second transgender person to be appointed a city commissioner in the entire United States.”



Julia Ashley Legaspi

Bob Lehman



Bob Lehman is one of the nation's preeminent military veterans representing the GLBT community. Lehman is also known as the founder of the popular nightclub Bourbon Street, which he opened in 1997 as a base for military and gay rights activism. In 2001, he launched San Diego's chapter of American Veterans for Equal Rights, and in 2003 he became the first openly gay veteran appointed to the San Diego County Veteran's Advisory Board. In these capacities, he focused on ending discrimination against gays in the military and spearheaded efforts to provide wheelchairs to low-income, disabled veterans. In 2006, Lehman founded the Stonewall Citizen's Patrol in response to the brutal gay bashing of six men at the July Pride Festival. Lehman and his partner, Tom Felkner, recently began San Diego News Group, Inc., a GLBT community print and Internet media company.

Aaron A. Borovoy



Board of Directors, Imperial Court de San Diego, Inc.; Secretary, AIDS Memorial Task Force; Member, Grocery Hearts Organizing Committee ... Aaron A. Borovoy's resume of community service cannot be condensed into a few words. The community positions Borovoy has held throughout the years and the recognitions he's received are plentiful: Special Commendation, San Diego Mayor Maureen O'Connor; Special Commendation, San Diego City Councilmember John Hartley; Crystal Hart Award by *Update* newsmagazine; Mosaic Wolf Emperor of The Imperial Court de San Diego, Inc.

Borovoy even has a day named after him – City Councilmember Toni Atkins proclaimed May 13 "Aaron Borovoy" Day in the Third District.

Robert H. Gleason is a long-time San Diegan and is heavily involved in community and philanthropic activities. A commissioner for the City of San Diego's Commission for Arts and Culture and a member of the San Diego County Advisory Board of U.S. Bank, he also holds positions as the past chair of the board of the San Diego LGBT Community Center and as chair of the San Diego LGBT Community Leadership Council, an organization comprised of more than 40 organizations in the GLBT and allied communities. Gleason lives in Kensington with his partner of 15 years and their two children.



Robert H. Gleason

Before moving to San Diego in 1996 to accept a position as senior pastor at Metropolitan Community Church San Diego, Tony Freeman lived in Florida and Denver, where he was involved with HIV/AIDS services, the Imperial Courts' Scholarship Review Committee and the GLBT Community Services Center. **Since settling in Allied Gardens, with his partner and their 11-year-old son, Tony Freeman has received numerous awards for his community activities.** They include: helping to found Sunburst Apartments, San Diego's first supportive housing project for GLBT homeless youth; founding Operation Hope for the Hungry, which provided critical community and ecumenical support for the San Diego Food Bank when it was forced to find a new home; and founding Caravan of Hope, which collected and delivered supplies to GLBT people affected by Hurricane Katrina. He received the 1998 Nicky Governor's Award for community service, the 2001 Champion of Pride award, and he is a 2006 recipient of the Center's Visionary Award for work on the GLBT homeless youth housing project. In August 2007, Freeman was appointed executive director of the San Diego Human Dignity Foundation.



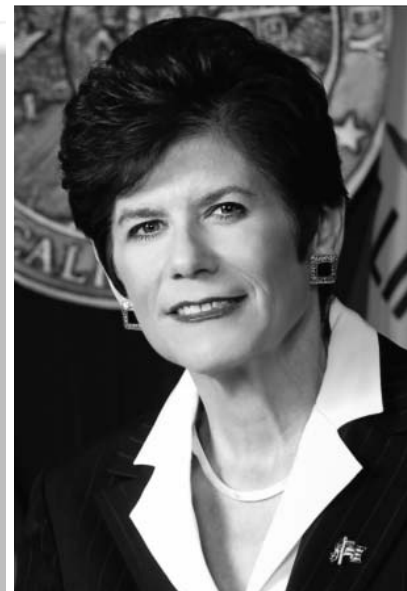
Tony Freeman

John Graham Jr.



A San Diego Police Officer for 27 years and the first openly gay police officer in San Diego, John Graham Jr. has worked in patrol, traffic, crime prevention, training and development and public relations. A certified defensive tactics and controlled force instructor, he also teaches in the San Diego Police Academy and continues to work in community-oriented policing and crime prevention. Graham Jr. lives in San Diego with his partner of 16 years.

“The clerk helping in your division today may be your boss tomorrow” – that’s what the plaque in Bonnie Dumanis’ office says. Dumanis has never forgotten how she, the first woman to serve as district attorney for San Diego County, got her start. Dumanis began her career in the San Diego District Attorney’s office as a junior clerk typist, studying law at night and receiving her Juris Doctorate degree from Thomas Jefferson School of Law in 1976. As district attorney, she’s made public safety her top priority, focusing on crime prevention, reducing recidivism, helping victims and keeping the office transparent and accessible to the people of San Diego County. She also serves on the California State Bar Association Board of Governors, California District Attorneys Association Board of Directors, is a Commissioner for California Peace Officers Standards and Training, a member of the San Diego County Police Chiefs and Sheriff’s Association, an Earl B. Gilliam Bar Association Member, a past president of the Lawyers Club of San Diego, served on the Board of Directors of the San Diego Bar Association and taught ethics at the University of San Diego School of Law.



Bonnie Dumanis

Carolina Alcoser Ramos



The awards section on Carolina Alcoser Ramos’ resume lists an honor for almost every year: 1995 – San Diego Pride Community Service Award; 1996 – Citizen of the Year Award; 1997 – Service Award Polinski Children’s Center – the list goes on and on. Most recently, Ramos’ received the 2007 Vagina Warrior Award from V-Day San Diego and Shakti Rising. But where you’ll find Ramos most days is working as the program coordinator of Latino Services at the San Diego LGBT Community Center, where she conducts sensitivity training on GLBT issues throughout the county and state. Ramos has also recently been appointed to the Human Relations Commission of San Diego and is on the Latino Advisory Board for the State Office of AIDS.

Bob Nelson is a member of the Board of Directors of The San Diego LGBT Community Center. He has served on the Finance Committee of the Greater San Diego Business Association and on the Advisory Board for the San Diego Human Dignity Foundation.

Nelson is currently a member of the board of directors and secretary-treasurer of both the San Diego Convention Center Corporation and San Diego Theaters Corporation, operator of San Diego Civic Theater and Balboa Theater. Nelson has also served as a member of Deputy Mayor Toni Atkins’ transition team pending election of Mayor Jerry Sanders, and as a member of Mayor Dick Murphy’s LGBT Advisory Committee, among many other capacities.



Bob Nelson

The 1970s found **Carla Coshow** driving a borrowed 18-wheeler from bar to bar to pick up donated kegs of beer for the first Pride Festival, organized out of a parking lot on Hancock Street. A few years later, in 1982, the community elected Coshow as Miss Gay Hillcrest 1982. That year, Coshow began co-publishing a weekly newspaper, edited by Christine Kehoe, who went on to become state senator. By 1994, Coshow, along with four partners, bought the popular nightclub The Flame, "to establish a place where lesbians could go and feel at home." But her busy schedule didn't stop her from holding numerous fund-raisers, including the annual birthday celebrations for the Live and Let Live Alano Club, which supports meetings for those recovering from substance abuse in the GLBT community. Currently the broker for Coshow Real Estate Group, Carla and her partner underwrote last year's "Women Fest" at the San Diego LGBT Center and have presented several educational seminars to assist first-time buyers and beginning investors.



Carla Coshow

Tracy Jarman



As Fire Chief of the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department, **Tracy Jarman** served for 23 years in almost every capacity in the support services areas of the department before Mayor Jerry Sanders selected her for the position out of 30 other applicants, saying "She is not only superbly well qualified, but also the perfect person for the job." Jarman administers a staff of 928 firefighters, 124 lifeguards, 85 uniformed positions in Emergency Medical Services, 121 civilian personnel and oversees a budget of \$160 million.

While many GLBT community leaders are on the forefront of the action, some, like **Chris Shaw**, prefer to stay behind the scenes. Shaw, who struggled as an entrepreneur for years, now owns Club Montage and co-owns Urban Mo's and Kickers, and his community involvement is through these operations and others he's owned over the years. But whether running the beer booth for Pride or orchestrating huge events to raise money for charity, Shaw's priority is always the same: When asked to donate, he always says yes – Shaw has helped raise thousands for the AIDS Foundation, AIDS Project, the John Ciccassio Clinic and the Food Bank, among many other organizations.



Chris Shaw

Alberto Cortés



In the fall of 1983, a few months after moving to San Diego, **Alberto Cortés**, started volunteering with the San Diego AIDS Information Line. San Diego had 22 documented cases of AIDS. Established earlier in 1983, the information line was managed and staffed by 15-20 volunteers – mostly gay men – and was one of San Diego's first educational/informational responses to AIDS. Alberto has been involved in the fight against AIDS ever since. During the last 24 years he has participated in numerous organizations and currently serves as executive director of Mama's Kitchen – a unique, volunteer-driven organization that provides home-delivered meals, grocery bags and pantry services to men, women and children affected by HIV/AIDS or other critical illness.

The San Diego LGBT Center is located at 3909 Centre St. in Hillcrest. Doors open for Lambda's '20 years... 20 Heroes' on Saturday Dec. 8, at 6 p.m. and the program will begin at 7 p.m.

The Dec. 8 event will include entertainment, hors d'oeuvres and a silent auction. General tickets are \$50, and VIP tickets are \$80. Major sponsorships are available as well. For tickets, table reservations or more information call 619-260-1522 or 619-692-1967, or contact Lambda Archives at lambdaarchives.org.