

Gay Parade: 14 Years of Pride

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Approaching a 14th annual parade that gets bigger each year, organizers of the Annual Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade are gearing up this week for a day of hoopla and celebration. But as the spectre of AIDS and AIDS-related diseases be-

of gay and lesbian recognition.

"The biggest change has probably been AIDS," he says. The parade has been growing by the year; last year participants numbered at close to 1,000 according to organizers. But now, "We notice our losses," says

gay and lesbian employment in the schools was on the California ballot. "The underlying theme that always runs through is gay and lesbian pride. It's a time to come together and recognize ourselves as a community," she says, recalling the threads of political organization surrounding both the Briggs Initiative and the AIDS crisis. In the face of political crises, she adds, "This is a time for the rest of the community to come to show their support for gay and lesbian struggles."

"There's a real sense of political strength," adds Santa Cruz Mayor John Laird, who is openly gay and has been involved in the parade since the mid-'70s. "[The parades] seem to grow in strength every year, in numbers and in sense of purpose." Laird points to the prominence of AIDS- and gay-related issues in the national forefront and in presidential speeches. "I think that there's a gaining of strength nationally."

"The issue of people's choices in their lives and sexuality are normal human drives," concludes Kenny. "Because someone is gay or lesbian or different from the mainstream culture doesn't make what they do wrong. This is a celebration of diversity...an affirmation...a shot in the arm."

Gay and lesbian pride week will culminate with the 14th annual parade and rally at 11 am on Saturday. The parade begins at the corner of Center and Cathcart streets and will be followed by a rally at noon in San Lorenzo Park.



Parading in the '70s

comes more and more acute, organizers and participants in this march are looking toward a more somber event as the Gay and Lesbian Parade treads its way through the '80s.

In anticipation of this Saturday's event, *The Sun* spoke to some of the longstanding participants in the gay and lesbian pride movement about the evolution of the needs and concerns of members of the gay and lesbian community, and the evolution of the parade.

Jerry Solomon, a local clinical psychologist and president of the Santa Cruz AIDS Foundation, has been going to the parade since 1976, when only 100 or so people lined the mall with costumes and signs in demand

Solomon. Each year, "We notice the people who don't show up" as AIDS-related deaths and diseases linger through the community. This year, AIDS will be everpresent; people who are debilitated because of the disease will ride in a pickup truck. "Even though there is a sense of celebration, there is a sense of sadness and seriousness about the event," he says. As the predominant tides in the community have shifted, so have the themes of the parade. "We not only want lip service [about gay existence], at this point we want government recognition [of AIDS]."

Jo Kenny, director of SCAP, remembers the height of the parade in 1978, when the Briggs Initiative to outlaw