



## Chicago Celebrates Pride and Diversity with 39th Annual Pride Parade This Sunday

By [Kevin Wayne](#)

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The 39th Chicago Pride Parade steps off at Noon, Sunday, June 29th

Chicago, IL - June 1st officially began a month of celebration of pride in the international and local lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities. Each year Chicago's pride celebrations culminate with the annual Chicago Pride Parade organized by PRIDEChicago and held on the last Sunday of June.

Pride parades were originally started to commemorate a night in June 1969 when gays and lesbians fought back during a raid at the Stonewall Inn, a New York City gay bar. Gay bars were routinely raided by the police in the 1960's across the country. That night, a riot ensued, that kicked off the formation of the modern day gay rights movement. Since that time, pride parades in most cities have grown into celebrations that include social, as well as political expressions of pride. The Chicago Pride Parade was first held in 1970, making it one of the longest-running pride parades in United States.

Since 1970 when only 150 people participated in the parade, social and political attitudes toward the gay and lesbian population have changed and Chicago's Pride Parade has gained visibility and prominence. "Attitudes about the LGBT communities have changed significantly since 1970," said Richard Pfeiffer, Coordinator PRIDE Chicago. "As more and more LGBTs have come out over the years, there have been changes in laws and attitudes."

Last year the parade drew over 400,000 spectators despite a rainy afternoon – this year some estimate nearly 450,000 – 500,000 will attend. The Chicago Pride Parade has become Chicago's second largest parade, behind the annual Bud Billiken Parade, which is also the largest African-American parade in the country.

The 39th Annual Chicago Pride Parade will step off from the corner of Belmont and Halsted at Noon on Sunday, June 29 in Boystown, Chicago, the nation's first government-recognized gay village. The parade proceeds north on Halsted from Belmont Avenue, passing the Center on Halsted at Waveland; south on Broadway Avenue (at Grace) to Diversey Avenue and east on Diversey Avenue to Cannon Drive.

Leading this year's Chicago Pride Parade as Grand Marshal will be Eric Alva, openly gay ex-Marine, and activist. Eric is best known for coming out in 2007 and joining Congressman Martin Meehan in introducing the Military Readiness Enhancement Act, a bill designed to repeal the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. Eric, who also served as a Grand Marshal of last year's San Francisco Pride Parade, will be riding in a classic car near the front of the parade. ([Read more](#) about Eric Alva)

"There are LGBTs in many walks of life who are standing up for their rights and who are becoming heroes and role models," said Pfeiffer. "Whatever, your opinion of the war, Eric served his country as a Marine for 13 years, was seriously injured and lost a limb in the process, and has been working diligently with Congressmen to repeal the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy."

Along with the festive and colorful floats in this year's parade will be the usual politicians, decorated vehicles and walking contingents. The number of participants is capped at 250.

Parade organizers encourage spectators to arrive early and public transportation is encouraged. The Chicago Transit Authority elevated Red and Brown Line stop at Belmont and Red Line stop at Addison provide ready access to the parade area. CTA bus routes #8, 21, 77, 152 and 156 also service the area. For more information, visit Chicago Transit Authority's official website at [www.yourcta.com](http://www.yourcta.com)

ABC 7 Chicago will broadcast a one hour recap of the parade at 11:35 PM on Sunday, June 29. The show, hosted by Janet Davis and Lou Canellis with special guests WXRT's Terri Hemmert and parade coordinator Pfeiffer, will feature taped highlights from the parade.

For more information on PRIDEChicago visit [www.chicagopridecalendar.org](http://www.chicagopridecalendar.org)

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