

san diego

Lambda Archives honors 2010 Heroes, Pioneers, Trailblazers

Discussion with city officials underway for permanent home

BY RICK BRAATZ, STAFF REPORTER

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Lambda Archives of San Diego (LASD); a nonprofit organization that collects and preserves San Diego GLBT history; honored activists and leaders at its 2010 Heroes, Pioneers & Trailblazers awards ceremony, last Friday.

“Each of the inductees have done so much to advance education, awareness and understanding of our issues within and outside our community,” said Senator Christine Kehoe, a 2008 Trailblazer awardee. “I want to congratulate each and every one of the inductees personally. You have rightfully earned a place in the community’s heart and history.”

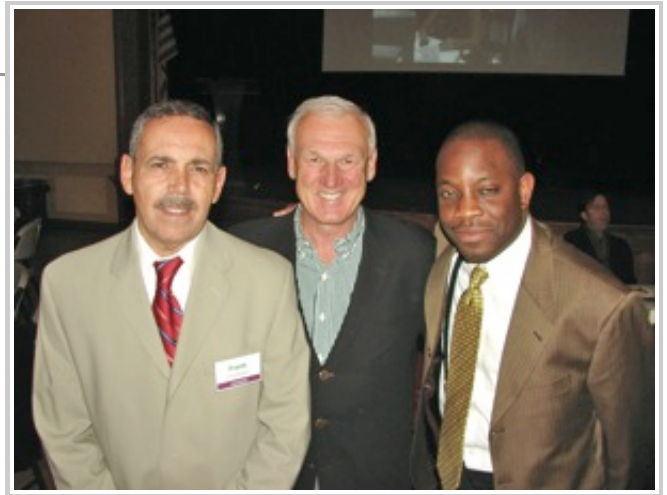
Former San Diego city councilmember and State Assembly candidate Toni Atkins, first out gay FBI agent Frank Buttino, lesbian activist and first female Center executive director Jeri Dilno, The Big Kitchen owner Judy “the Beauty” Forman, former Stepping Stone executive director Cheryl Houk, gay rights activist Mel Merrill, bartender and philanthropist Big Mike Phillips, Latina transgender activist Sandra Ramirez and former Lambda Archives Board president Sharon Parker were honored for their life’s work at the ceremony held at the San Diego LGBT Community Center. Parker received the President’s Award and young transgender activist Isaac Nicholas Gomez and his family received the Youth Trailblazing Award.

During the ceremony, organizers screened a short film of interviews with the honorees. In the film, honorees were asked to reflect on their accomplishments.



City Councilmembers Todd Gloria and Carl DeMaio handed out commendations provided by Gloria to each honoree.

Before handing out the awards, Gloria said, “I understand every



During their interviews in the film, both Ramirez and Phillips discussed their reason for becoming activists.

“I saw a lot of need in the transgender community, and I started getting involved and going to support groups and offering myself to help,” Ramirez said. “Sometimes you need someone like a guide to help direct you to where you want to go.”

Phillips said he became active in the community after watching strangers help his best friend Tino as he was dying of AIDS.

“When he died I promised myself [that] if I’m going to stay here, I want to do something, I don’t know what, and I don’t know how, but I want to do something to make sure that other people that go through what Tino went through have the same opportunities that Tino did,” Phillips said, who moved to San Diego 20 years ago.



single day I go to work that I'm there because many people – some of these people right here [pointing to the audience] and right here [pointing to the group of honorees standing in line] helped lay the trail to help get me there.”

Kehoe handed out a special Senate certificate of recognition to each honoree after Gloria and DeMaio handed out Gloria's commendations.

City Commissioner Nicole Murray-Ramirez, founder and co-chair of the event, said the GLBT community loses a significant portion of its history each year.



“Our pioneers, our trailblazers and heroes are passing away every year, and their materials, testimonies and collections are being lost with them,” he said.

Murray-Ramirez said the recent death of early GLBT community ally Lou Arko is one example. Arko had owned several gay bars in San Diego in the 1960s and '70s, but no one ever interviewed him about his experience, he said.

“Can you imagine what that interview would have been like? And we lost that,” Murray-Ramirez said.

Update, a long running San Diego GLBT news weekly that folded several years ago, is another example, he said.

“When it closed its doors, they were going to throw out every one of their issues. But along came the good people at Lambda Archives who went out with a truck and rescued those publications and, indeed, a record of our history,” he said.

“The *Update* collection is one of the happier examples. We see things that are lost all the time,” said LASD Board President Frank Nobiletti.

Murray-Ramirez announced that he and Nobiletti will be meeting with City Councilmembers Gloria and Kevin Faulconer to discuss the possibility of building a permanent home for LASD in either of their districts. Currently, LASD is housed in a four-room office space located in back of the Diversionary Theatre in University Heights.

“I look forward to working with all of you to take it to the next level because we do need a home for our archives,” Gloria said. “We need something that's going to be sustained for our future generations to enjoy the work that all of you have done.”



Nobiletti said that if the LASD were to receive a permanent facility,



the community could expect a far more active archive.

“You can expect an archive that’s always doing displays and exhibits including, traveling exhibits from other cities, and you can expect at least twice as more young people being transformed by their experience at the archives,” he said.

“Lambda Archives illustrates our struggles in the community and our progress as a people,” Kehoe said. “It is a story that can be enjoyed today, and we hope for generations to come.”

For more information on the 2010 Heroes, Pioneers & Trailblazers, visit <http://alturl.com/psyw>.

Comments

Evan Kohler says:

How about names of the Honories in the pictures? Thanks

Mar 05, 2010 0:47 AM

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