

## Lauderdale Memorial Event Fails to Include Gays

### Gay Leader Declined Opportunity to Have Lambda Chorale, Cleric to Perform

By Norm Kent

On the evening of September 18, 2001, residents of the City of Fort Lauderdale gathered at Holiday Park to honor those who lost their lives in the September 11 attacks on America. Holiday Park is in the epicenter of the popular Victoria Park section of Fort Lauderdale, the heart of the gay residential community in that city.

The hastily put together event was coordinated by Michael Kasten, an openly gay man who is the President of the Council of Civic Associations in Fort Lauderdale. It was Kasten who invited Mayor Jim Naugle, State Representative Jack Seiler, City Manager Floyd Johnson and representatives of the clergy.

It was also apparently Kasten who declined offers and overtures from Terry DeCarlo, co producer of the event, and the operator of WHTN Productions, to invite Reverend Grant Ford of the Metropolitan Community Church, as well as the Lambda Chorale, a gay chorus.

Said Gary Keating of the Lambda Chorale, "It was a Tuesday evening, a night when we routinely rehearse, and I told Terry our group would be glad to participate. We were never called back, never given an opportunity to do so." DeCarlo confirmed that he advised Kasten the Lambda Chorale offered to perform.

Kasten refused to answer questions on why they were not invited, but sources speculated that as a future candidate for city commission, Kasten sought not to offend Mayor Jim Naugle and other religious leaders who were on the podium. Kasten denied this.

Kasten did state that he was never

advised that Grant Ford was available, but De Carlo rebuked that contention. "It was Grant Ford and the MCC who even helped me get candles for the event. But I had no authority to put together the program. That was all in Michael's hand."

Added DeCarlo, "It did strike me as odd that there were no gay people on the program, but [Kasten] was working with the Mayor and everyone else. It wasn't for me to push anyone." Using his email network, DeCarlo helped get the press releases out, and suggested participants to Kasten, but said, "The program was all up to Kasten."

City Manager Floyd Johnson and Mayor Jim Naugle confirmed that the program was planned solely by Kasten.

Kasten claimed he arranged the program with Johnson, but Johnson said no one ever asked him to have a member of the gay clergy or even the Lambda Chorale perform. "I was told there was going to be a program, but that Kasten co-ordinated it," Johnson stated.

Kasten's official position, emailed to *the Express* was "The city manager and I were the ones who decided on the speakers/talent for the vigil. Commissioner Tim Smith, in a phone conversation with me Tuesday morning, also contributed his input."

The scheduled speakers, he said, Chaplain Brasswell and Kem Hassaim from the mosque in Cooper City, were decided upon before they were offered the Chorale.

In circumventing the question of why he failed to nevertheless include a gay representative on the program, Kasten replied "I cannot stress enough



Photo By Pompano Bill

that the person who helped organize and then ran this citywide event, where the mayor, state senator, state representative, city commissioners, city manager, fire chief and police chief attended was... an out, gay man...me!"

Claiming he declined to have the Lambda Chorale group perform because he wanted the event kept 'simple,' Kasten lauded himself further by stating, "There is an out, proud, gay man (and everyone knows it) who sits at the table participating during every commission meeting, works closely with every city commissioner, has an open door policy with the mayor, tackles tough issues with the city manager, leads civic activists of all ages and races and works in conjunction with city staff and state elected officials and his name is Michael Kasten."

Kasten concluded by remarking, "Furthermore, if I am involved in the planning of such a city wide event in the future, gay and lesbian groups, as well as other minority groups in this city will always be considered."

## Reno to be Feted at Rainbow Gala

### WSVN Broadcaster Stevens Will be Master of Ceremonies

Janet Reno, former Attorney General of the United States of America, will attend and receive the Lifetime Achievement Award at this year's Stars of the Rainbow, an annual event hosted by the Gay and Lesbian Community Center of South Florida.

"We are extremely pleased that Miss Reno has accepted our invitation," said JJ Schmidt, the co-chair of this year's event. "Throughout her career, Miss Reno has been a committed fighter for

youth and children, she has also taken up the cause of equality and non-discrimination, it is for those reasons the Gay and Lesbian Community Center of South Florida will be presenting her with their Lifetime Achievement Award."

Reno recently stated that her campaign to unseat Florida Governor Jeb Bush would be on hold, for now. The former U.S. Attorney General says this is a time for all Americans to "come together," and is not running any campaign events. Reno, a Miami native, said she has canceled all her upcoming fundraising events, and is only giving a limited number of speeches.

Reno was sworn in as the Nation's first woman Attorney General by President Clinton on March 12, 1993. From 1978 until the time of her appointment, Reno served as the State's attorney for Dade County. While State's attorney, Ms. Reno focused attention on prevention programs that enabled children to grow in a safe, constructive environment. She helped reform the juvenile justice system and pursued delinquent fathers for child support payments. Reno also helped establish the Miami Drug Court, which has been a model for courts around the country.

Back to serve as co-Masters of Ceremonies this year's gala will be Craig Stevens, Fox news anchorman, and Ted Scouten, CBS news reporter. Celebrity

entertainment will be announced in the next couple of weeks.

Stated GLCCSF Director, Ed Nicholas, "The Stars of the Rainbow Awards Gala is the GLCCSF's Academy Awards, and annual banquet. It is a magical evening in which we recognize, acknowledge and celebrate the contributions made by politicians, community leaders and volunteers, activists and philanthropists who have dedicated their efforts toward enriching South Florida's gay and lesbian community."

This year's awards will be presented in each of the following categories: Arts & Culture, Business Contribution, Male & Female Parents of the Year, Male & Female Role Models of the year, Media & Publications, Organizational Leader, Religious/Spiritual, Senior Contributions, Youth Contributions, Organizational Volunteer of the year and Health Community.

This year, the GLCCSF will hold its Stars of the Rainbow Awards Gala on Saturday, November 17, 2001 at the Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center at Port Everglades.

VIP and regular tickets as well as sponsorships for the event are available by calling the GLCCSF at 954.463.9005. Nomination forms for any of the awards are available at the center, on their website [www.glccsf.org](http://www.glccsf.org), or nominations can be emailed to [glccftl@aol.com](mailto:glccftl@aol.com).



Miss Janet Reno

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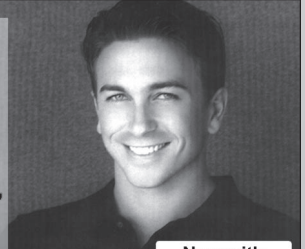
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