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Chris Good lost 15 years of his life to the closet. He spent years keeping his sexuality under wraps. He did not follow the pseudo-mantra of being "out and proud."

But anger proved to be a motivating force for Good. The closet door is now wide open, and he's the driving force behind what might be the most prominent event in Cincinnati's gay community in quite some time, Cincinnati Gay Pride Parade 2000.

Cincinnatians might or might not have noticed the absence of a Gay Pride Parade in recent years, but Good did. About a year ago, he began asking his friend, Michael X. Chanak, questions about the temporary demise of the parade. According to Chanak, things began falling apart after the controversial Issue 3 in 1993.

"It was a very horrible thing, and it had a chilling effect on gay organizations," Chanak



By Ryan Greis

Grand Marshall Peaches LaVerne**Also This Issue****[Double-Barreled Shots](#)**

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explains.

The history of Issue 3 extends back to 1991 when Cincinnati City Council modified the city's charter to include legal protection in the public sector to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people. In 1992, city council passed an extension by ordinance to include the private sector as well. The following year, fundamental Christian groups organized a petition for a public referendum to remove references to gays and lesbians from the city charter and prevent City Council from extending special rights to the gay community.

Once on the ballot, Issue 3 passed. Though Chanak says Issue 3 was not a direct cause, Pride Parades soon vanished from the Cincinnati scene after a peak attendance of more than 1,000 people during the 1993 event.

"It was very emotionally and financially draining. ... A lot of discontent, a lot of tiredness, a lot of empty wallets. We believed we would succeed, and we didn't. It was a setback," Chanak says.

For Good, resuscitation of the Gay Pride Parade was long overdue. "The gay community is too quiet in this city. I want to scream and yell and make some noise," Good says. "This city would shut down without us."

Though minor pride events have occurred in the Tri-state in recent years, there has been nothing to this level of visibility. According to Chanak, the return of a Gay Pride Parade is valuable for the community. "Pride is important to people. Without some sort of visible rally and parade, what's the point? You need an anchor event. Without something to be a focal point, it's really hard to get people's attention around pride," Chanak explains.

And the parade, with 75-year-old drag queen Peaches LaVerne as grand marshall, will be the

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center point of Sunday's festivities preceded at 11 a.m. by a rally at Burnet Woods Gazebo, organized and emceed by Chanak, and a picnic afterwards at Hoffner Park in Northside, sponsored by The Gay/Lesbian Community Center of Greater Cincinnati. But getting to this point proved to be a lot of hard work for Good, who has averaged 25 hours a week pulling the event together.

"I've learned a lot about my strengths and weaknesses as an organizer," Good says, commenting that it won't matter how many people show up on Sunday. For him, the parade has already been a success despite little community interest initially and Good's lack of experience.

To make up for that, Good, who had only participated in gay groups on a membership level, called upon Chanak's background in getting the parade afloat once again. Chanak had been an active member of the gay community since the late 1970s, serving on the Gay Pride Committee in some capacity from 1986-1993. This year Chanak is serving as advisor.

"My part was to help Chris and the committee to avoid the big mistakes," Chanak says.

The Cincinnati Gay Pride Parade Committee has been conducting open meetings. The financial reports are posted on the Web (**home.fuse.net/cincypride/**). "I wanted to make sure that when we started this thing that everything had to be open," Chanak explains. "You really have to do everything in your power to avoid getting caught up in anything that is not principle-based."

With neither Good nor Chanak a member of a formal group, obstacles had to be overcome. Friends thought that they would never pull it off. A parade would prove to be too expensive.



Nobody would be interested in doing it.

In the beginning, that almost seemed true. Money came primarily via friends. Few attended the monthly meetings advertised on fliers. Gay organizations were slow to come on board. Good had no recognition in the community. "Nobody knew me, so they were real reluctant to let me play with them," Good says.

Things changed once a parade permit was obtained last December. It was a sign that the first Gay Pride Parade since 1994 was more than just talk. The gay community, which some feel has its separate factions, started pulling together. "There's really no sense of community here at all. A lot of anger gets misplaced, and we take it out on each other and we really shouldn't," Good comments.

In addition, the Gay Pride Parade is receiving more support from the straight community than ever before. "It's people who believe in this and want to see it succeed, straight and gay alike," Good says. "(Everyone) from churches to porn shops are showing up to this thing. That's really cool."

Now Good just hopes to see a lot of people out in support. It's a long way from when many people thought a parade was just talk.

"Even though I was ignored, I still kept going," Good says. "June 11. ... The parade. ... That's what you want. ... Don't get distracted."

On Sunday, Good gets what he wants.

**CINCINNATI GAY PRIDE PARADE 2000
kicks off at noon Sunday, travelling from
Burnet Woods Gazebo down Ludlow and
Hamilton avenues to Hoffner Park in
Northside. The Gay Pride Rally begins at 11
a.m. in Burnet Woods. The Gay Pride Picnic**

lasts from 1-4 p.m. in Hoffner Park.

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