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## **NC PrideFest 02 Set to Outstrip 2001 Success**

**DURHAM, NC, August 22, 2002** With five weeks to go until the 18<sup>th</sup> N.C. Gay Pride Parade rolls down the streets of Durham, event organizers say this year's parade and festivities are poised to surpass last year's successes and to set several PrideFest firsts. Events will run from Friday, Sept. 27 until Sunday, Sept. 29 across the Research Triangle area, with the focal event being the N.C. Pride Parade, at 1:00 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 28 in the Ninth Street area of downtown Durham.

"Last year, we moved the parade to late September, so it was the biggest Southeastern LGBT event in the fall," said Keith Hayes, a spokesperson for the N.C. Pride Organization. "By sticking to that timing and keeping the event in Durham for a third year, we're building up our momentum of success. If you compare where we are now with where we were this time last year, I'd say we're really going to light things up on Pride weekend."

Marching groups and other participants continue to sign up for the event, with spaces still open for interested organizations. To accommodate the growth in participants, the parade route will be expanded over the 2001 route. Organizers say the number of floats is expected to increase, from seven to about a dozen – not quite a Fifth Avenue event, but a significant improvement over the one float that marked the 2000 parade two years ago.

Notable new sponsors for the 2002 activities include the Showtime, Out in America, WholeFoods, Ocean Prince Bread & Breakfast Inn, Gay Tours and Vacations, the Madhatter Bakery, The Clarion State Capital Hotel and St. John's

MCC Church in Raleigh. These join such returning sponsors and partners as AdamMale, U.S. Airways, Raleigh's premier nightclub Legends, *Curve* magazine, Flex Club, White Rabbit Books, *The Independent* newspaper, and the statewide bi-monthly newspapers *Q-Notes* and *The Front Page*. As in 2001, the Parade will start from and return to Duke University East Campus, where opening ceremonies kick off at 11:30. A vendor fair with more than 100 participating organizations will set up on campus and run from 10:00 a.m. through the evening. An *Independent Gayla* mixer and hot air balloon rides will mark evening events, from 5 to 7p.m.

"I think anyone who attended or participated in the 2001 PrideFest expects 2002 to be even more positive, more fun, bigger, better for the community," said Hayes. "We are not going to disappoint them. And anyone who didn't come last year should be there this September. We're really learning how to throw this party right!"

Opportunities remain open for volunteers, marching groups, vendors, sponsors and other participants. Comprehensive information on PrideFest activities throughout September is available online at [www.ncpride.org](http://www.ncpride.org), as is information on entering the parade and becoming involved in other ways.

The N.C. Pride Organization is a 501(C)3 organization and is committed to working with the diverse LGBT community to promote unity among gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people and to promote a positive image of our community in North Carolina and beyond.

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