



Pride Fest kicks off Pride Weekend in Chicago

By [Brett Anthony](#)

Annual Pride Fest celebration kicks off Pride in Boystown

Chicago, IL - Chicago Pride Fest, a two-day prelude to Sunday's Pride Parade, kicked off Friday afternoon on a near perfect Summer afternoon in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood.

Pride Fest, now in it's 6th year, has expanded to become a two-day celebration. The event is hosted by The Northalsted Area Merchants Association (NAMA).

"This opportunity to start celebrating at 3 p.m. on Friday allows us to bring more great talent, bands and performers, as well as more vendors who might not be willing to participate in a one-day festival," Drew Knecht, president of NAMA, told ChicagoPride.com.

The annual celebration, which showcases an eclectic lineup of arts and crafts, food and other vendors, also includes some exciting free entertainment on two stages including one dedicated to some of Chicago's fine performers in the gay community.

Friday, Martha Wash entertained the crowd. Other performances included the Kimi Hayes Band, Windy City Cowboys, eighties cover band Rock Candy, and powerpop group Dot Dot Dot (8 PM).

Saturday's festivities begin with Petco's Pet Pride Parade hosted by Miss Fozzie at 12:30 p.m. The South Stage will feature the cheerleaders of the Chicago Spirit Brigade (2 p.m.), the Righteously Outrageous Twirling Corps – ROTC (2 p.m.), The Joans, (3:30 p.m.), the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus (4:30 p.m.), disco-funk-motown revue 7-DEEZ (6 p.m.), and eighties tribute band Sixteen Candles (8 p.m.). On the North Stage, there will be two drag shows (3:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.) and performances by Boi Toiz (1:30 p.m.), former teen-pop idol Debbie Gibson (2:30 p.m.), R&B singer-songwriter Thelma Houston (4:30 p.m.), Crystal Waters (6:30 p.m.), Inaya Day (7:30 p.m.), and dance singer Ultra Naté (8:30 p.m.). There will also be a fashion show by the International Academy of Design & Technology at 6:30 p.m.

Suggested gate donation is \$7. Pride Fest takes place on Halsted between Waveland and Grace

Chicago Pride Fest, as well as the following day's Pride Parade which draws more than 450,000 spectators, cap off a month of GLBT activities and events during Pride Month, which is celebrated each June.

The annual Chicago Pride Parade is Sunday, June 28, 2009 stepping off at Noon from Halsted and Belmont in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood.

NAMA also sponsors Northalsted Market Days, the Midwest's largest annual two-day outdoor street festival that draws more than 150,000 Chicagoans and LGBT visitors from around the globe. This year's Market Days—now celebrating its 28th year—will be held on Saturday and Sunday, August 1-2.

Chicago Pride Fest

Friday, June 26 3 p.m. - 11 p.m.

Saturday, June 27 11 a.m. - 11 p.m.

Pride Fest is sponsored by the Northalsted Area Merchants Association. Suggested gate donation is \$7.

[\(Event Details\)](#)

Chicago's 40th Annual Pride Parade

Sunday, June 28 at 12 p.m.

Step off at Belmont at Halsted

[\(Event Details\)](#)

Complete Chicago Pride Parade and Pride Fest details in the [Online Pride Guide](#) featuring parade details, event calendar, map, tips, photos and more.

*The ChicagoPride.com online Pride Guide is sponsored by Cesar's on Broadway,
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