



ORANGE COUNTY
residents
Tina
Fernandez
and Joe
Hodulik
were hon-
ored Sunday
for their con-
tributions at
the 13th
annual Gay
Pride Fes-
tival at Uni-
versity
of California,
Irvine.
• Photo: Matt
A. Brown / For
the Register

Awards presented at Gay Pride Festival

Honors • O.C.
official, business
owner recognized for
community efforts.

By **MONICA VALENCIA**
The Orange County Register

IRVINE

Tina Fernandez knows firsthand what discrimination is like.

As a child, the Mexican immigrant felt like she didn't belong in this country while still struggling to learn English.

Married, a mother of two, and straight, Fernandez, 46, nonetheless felt compelled to stand up for the rights of gay and lesbian students because her own experience made her sympathetic to their troubles.

On Sunday, the deputy director of Orange County's Human Relations Commission was named Woman of the Year at the county's Lesbian and Gay Pride Festival for spearheading efforts to ensure that gay and lesbian students are protected from discrimination.

She was one of two people

so honored at the University of California, Irvine, festival.

Joe Hodulik, owner of Framer's Workshop in Lake Forest, was named Man of the Year for framing certificates and donating art-related items to needy organizations.

It was the second time during the festival's 13-year history that a heterosexual like Fernandez has been recognized, event officials said.

Fernandez, a treasurer with the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network of Orange County, helped launch a campaign that educates people about Assembly Bill 537, which prohibits discrimination against gays and lesbians in public schools.

"In a society that is not accepting (of homosexuals), they are very much at risk of suicide and alcohol abuse," Fernandez said.

She also started the School Inter-Ethnic Relations Program to promote tolerance at Orange County schools.

Fernandez said her children tested her commitment to human rights, one by wearing rainbow jeans, the other by carrying a notebook saying, "I'm gay. So what," even

though he's straight.

"I have to be able to support them and love them no matter what," she said.

Hodulik is noted for donating his time to nonprofit agencies. During the past 15 years, he has helped the Elections Committee of the County of Orange, a gay and lesbian political group; the Sheriff's Department Project 99 for fallen officers; and the AIDS Services Foundation.

He's also a garage-sale junkie who finds art gems to donate to community groups for fund-raiser auctions.

The Barras/Hagan Community Services award was also presented Sunday to the Youth Drop-In Center started by the Gay and Lesbian Center in July 2000. The center, which has seen more than 500 clients, provides education on safe sex, career development and other topics.

Denise Penn was given the Media Award for articles in numerous gay and lesbian publications and for hosting the "Gay and Lesbian News Magazine" cable TV show.

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