Central Arkansas Pride honors the 14th annual 2026 Arkansas PRIDEFest Diamond Honoree and Parade Grand Marshals

14th annual 2026 Arkansas PRIDEFest Diamond Honoree - Miss Major Griffin-Gracy and Parade Grand Marshals: Ms. Sharyn Grayson, Lisa Smith, and Sandy Bidwell

LITTLE ROCK, AR, UNITED STATES, September 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- October is LGBTQIA+ History Month. We are deeply honored to recognize these legacy advocates who have served Arkansas and the nation by promoting and advocating for the LGBTQIA+ community, supporting our mission to educate, inspire, and unite. Celebrate these incredible individuals with us on Capitol Avenue in Little Rock, Arkansas, on October 17th, 2026.



2026 Arkansas PRIDEFest Diamond Honoree Miss Major Griffin-Gracy

Arkansas PRIDEFest DIAMOND AWARD
Miss Major Griffin-Garcy - posthumous
October 25, 1946-October 13, 2025

Miss Major is a Black, gender-nonconforming activist who uses ALL pronouns. An American author, activist, and community organizer for transgender rights. A witness to the Stonewall Riots, she participated in activism and community organizing for a range of causes and served as the first executive director for the Transgender Gender Variant Intersex Justice Project. Griffin-Gracy contributed to oral history collections, including Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex, The Stonewall Reader, and The Stonewall Generation: LGBT Elders on Sex, Activism, and Aging. Activism book -> 2021 @VersoBks w/ @tmeronek
Her memoir, Miss Major Speaks: Conversations with a Black Trans Revolutionary, was released by Verso Books in 2023.
 Founder @houseofgg, Griffin-Gracy moved to Little Rock, Arkansas, after visiting the city for a

screening of MAJOR!, the 2015 documentary about her. She developed a property she initially called the House of GG into an informal retreat center for trans people. The property includes a guest house, pool, hot tub, merry-go-round, various gardens, and over 80 palm trees. In 2023, she renamed the property to Tilifi, an acronym for Telling It Like It Fuckin' Is
 Co-executive producer @transintrumpland



2026 Arkansas PRIDEFest Parade Grand Marshal - Ms. Sharyn Grayson

Arkansas PRIDEFest Grand Marshal Miss Sharyn Grayson

Nationally renowned Trans advocate and elder among her countless other achievements, she co-founded House of gg with her sister, Miss Major. She is grace; she is beauty; we are so grateful to have her here in Little Rock! With decades of advocay across the nation, Ms. Sharyn leads to build a better community. Exceptionally proud of her work at the Lavender Rights Project and TGI Justice Project (TGIJP).
A list of her accomplishments is as follows;



2026 Arkansas PRIDEFest Parade Grand Marshals Lisa Smith and Sandy Bidwell

-CEO/Sr. Consultant at Nonprofit & Consumer Svcs. Network (NPCSN)
June 1989 - Present · Little Rock, Arkansas Small/minority-owned/nonprofit/corporate business development specialists; Business plans; Budgets; Grant writing
-Former Senior Strategic Advisor at Lavender Rights Project, In May 2024 · Seattle, Washington
-Former Executive Director at TGI Justice Project (TGIJP), December 2021 - January 2024 · San Francisco, California
Supervised, developed, and expanded programs and client services.
-Former Director of Development & Transgender Programs/Services at Abounding Prosperity, Inc.
October 24, 2019 - March 31, 2020 · Dallas, Texas
-Former Chief Operating Officer/Chief Financial Officer at House of gg

April 4, 2015 - September 1, 2019 · Little Rock, Arkansas
Co-Founder, Organizer, Liaison, etc.

Arkansas PRIDEFest Grand Marshals
Lisa Smith and Sandy Bidwell

This dynamite couple has led the Diamond State Rodeo in Arkansas for a quarter century. Spouses Lisa Smith and Sandy Bidwell are two retired Army vets who ran Arkansas's biennial gay rodeo. They had responsibilities with the rodeo association and at their place of worship, Quapaw Quarter United Methodist. Rodeo wasn't necessarily the project they envisioned for their golden years, at least not until 2002. At a ceremony that year enshrining their "holy union," as they call it (marriage equality wouldn't be ushered into federal law until 13 years later, having lived in the Don't Ask Don't Tell era of our country's history), a couple of friends gave them a wedding gift in the form of an invitation to join the state's gay rodeo chapter, a charitable organization called the Diamond State Rodeo Association.
Smith and Bidwell found themselves at the state fairgrounds working as volunteers. The cultural markers of a queer-friendly space were there, to be sure, with pride flags, drag bingo sessions in one of the fairground buildings, queens fixing their makeup. Beverages flowed, laughter rang out, music and dances filled the night, encouraging community.
The Diamond State Rodeo is a gay rodeo and a member of the International Gay Rodeo Association, the national umbrella organization under which Diamond State and 16 other rodeo associations operate. The parent association publishes a set of safety guidelines called "Horse Sense," whose basics are part of the introductory "rodeo school" the Arkansas chapter puts on at the start of each rodeo weekend. Rodeo rookies can bring their closed-toe footwear, bike helmet, and leather gloves for tutorials on everything from calf roping to chute dogging, and Diamond State provides the rest: ropes, protective vests, steer rigs, and skills sessions. Sharing and mentoring their knowledge with others who are ready to rope a calf or compete in the barrel racing division, Bidwell said, depends on their confidence. "You can have 40 people at the school and only have five that actually have the guts to try it.
Lisa and Sandy advocated across rural America, out and proud.

We thank and honor these incredible individuals leading the LGBTQIA+ community and allies here in Arkansas.

Visit our webpage, arpride.org, for more details, how to get involved, or to sponsor our work. Email us at info@arpride.org for more information about PRIDEFest, the week of October 14-18 in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Dolores Wilk Executive Director
Central Arkansas Pride
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