



Local News News

## Chris Kerr Memorial Set for April 28 at Resurrection MCC



Brandon Wolf • April 19, 2018 🔥 233 📖 3 minutes read

Share
 Tweet
 Subscribe
 Share
 Mail

### Houston LGBTQ community mourns longtime advocate.

*By Brandon Wolf*

A celebration of Chris Kerr’s life is set for 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 28, at Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church.

Kerr, a longtime leader in Houston’s LGBTQ community who served as clinical director for the Montrose Center, died April 6 after suffering a stroke earlier this year. He was 65.



“Words fail me. Chris was an integral part of the Center and my life for the past 20 years. I am [heartbroken],” longtime Montrose Center executive director Ann Robison said following Kerr’s death.



Robison’s grief was echoed throughout Houston’s LGBTQ community.

Condolences appeared by the dozens on the Facebook page of Kerr’s widower, Michael Goh Kerr, who responded: “I will certainly miss him, my rock.”



Activist John Coulter wrote that he knew Kerr through the Montrose Center’s board of directors. “His devotion and dedication touched more lives than he’ll ever know,” Coulter said.

Following the stroke, Kerr underwent surgery and had been recovering with rehabilitation therapy. But unexpected bleeding reportedly began in his brain.

Chris and Michael Goh Kerr would have celebrated their 20th anniversary as a couple on May 8. They were married in San Diego in 2013.

Kerr spent 14 years in social services before going back to school in 1996 to earn his master’s degree in counseling psychology at the University of Houston. In 1998, he joined what was then the Montrose Counseling Center, with facilities at 701 Richmond.

During Kerr’s two-decade tenure, the Montrose Center’s budget grew from \$2 million to \$7 million, and the number of people the organization serves annually went from 10,000 to 50,000.



A passionate and eloquent spokesman for the organization, Kerr coordinated an ever-expanding group of Montrose Center programs, including LIFE (Living Insightfully for Empowerment), SPRY (Seniors Preparing for Rainbow Years), and Hatch Youth.



He was also instrumental in improving the relationship between the LGBTQ community and local law-enforcement agencies. He worked with the Houston Police Department, the Harris County Sheriff's Office, and the Houston Mayor's Office to develop an educational bus tour of Montrose that helps familiarize law-enforcement officers with the LGBTQ community. And he was closely involved with the Montrose Center's \$24 million planned senior housing project, which is scheduled to break ground this year.

Brittany Burch met Kerr when she interviewed for a staff position at the Center in 2009.

"I found Chris very mild-mannered and professional," recalls Burch, who eventually took over the LIFE program. "He had an open-door policy. If I had an important question, I could always ask for a few minutes of his undivided attention. I felt comfortable that he had my back, and never feared

repercussions. He trusted his staff. When they needed guidance, he gave it in a direct but supportive way.

“Chris went the extra mile,” Burch added. “During hurricanes Ike and Harvey, he was at the Center coordinating cleanup or organizing pantries. On ice days, he showed up just to be sure everyone was safe. He was not loud or dominating— [just] steady and reliable.”

Hatch Youth’s Deb Murphy met Kerr in 2002 when the Center absorbed that program.

“I liked him right off. He was very clear about what he wanted—and I could see he was kind and gentle,” Murphy said. “He loved to try new things, and wasn’t afraid of them not working out. We will feel the effect of this loss in ways we don’t yet imagine.”

Burch said although Kerr was a tireless LGBTQ advocate, he also understood the importance of work/life balance.

“His marriage, his family, and his dogs were all very important to him,” Burch said. “He was an early-bird at work [so he could leave the office] on time to be with those he loved most.”

Kerr’s best friend, Carl Han, treasures their 30-year relationship. When they met, Kerr was a Catholic Franciscan priest. He left the priesthood when he became interested in the Kolbe Project, a local organization that bought and sold artwork, donating the proceeds directly to HIV/AIDS causes.



When Kerr organized the project’s first big art fundraiser, Han volunteered to provide food. Han continued to volunteer his time and efforts to Kerr’s projects over the years, including the annual Love Party that raises funds for Hatch Youth’s high-school prom.

Han says he and Kerr loved to go dancing at Rich’s or Heaven, and enjoyed hanging out on Galveston’s beaches. Kerr met his husband at a meeting of Asian & Friends that was hosted by Han in 1998.

Asked what his friend would want for those he left behind, Han replied: “For Michael to be happy. And for everyone to be kind and to love each other.”



### Comments

