

Gay Pride Week observed this week; a first in Iowa

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Gay Pride Week is being observed in Iowa this week for the first time.

The week commemorates the Stonewall Riot nine years ago in which "gays rebelled against the unjustified closing of a gay bar [in Greenwich Village] by policemen," according to Philip Stinard, secretary of the Ames Gay Men's Alliance.

"The riots are often cited as the beginning of gay resistance against police harassment," Stinard said in a letter to the editor in last Thursday's Daily.

Stinard also said the Gay Men's Alliance "would like everyone to try to inform themselves more about gays and the problems they face."

In an interview, he said people could learn more about homosexuals by contacting a group member and talking to him. The Gay Men's Alliance can be reached through the Office of Student Life.

The Gay Men's Alliance has not organized a formal observance of Gay Pride Week.

The group didn't make any plans because it didn't learn about the week in time, Stinard said.

The Gay Coalition of Iowa, though, has organized a dinner and dance for this Saturday at the First Unitarian Church in Des Moines. Guest speakers will be Steven Brown, executive director of the Iowa Civil Liberties Union, and Curt Sytsma, a Des Moines attorney.

"The Gay Coalition of Iowa is more politically oriented" than the Gay Men's Alliance, Stinard said.

Currently, it is informing homosexuals about political candidates and their views on gay rights, he said. The group also publishes a newsletter.

However, the major problem homosexuals in Iowa face is prejudice rather than laws or politics. "There may not be legal problems, but there are lots of bigots," Stinard said.

The Gay Men's Alliance is more concerned with getting members to accept their homosexuality, he said, rather than changing Ames community views.

However, the group plans to begin a newsletter in July, Stinard said. Free copies will be distributed around campus.