MEDIA RELEASE

Official Statement from the President and Executive of Serving with Pride regarding the Orlando night club mass murder.

It was June 28th, 1969.

In the early morning, Police stormed into the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, New York. That evening, and for many nights after, LGBT community members fought for their right to be treated with respect, dignity, and to be recognized as equal members of society. In 1970, the first LGBT Pride Parades were held in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Chicago to commemorate the first anniversary of what is now known as the Stonewall riots. These events arguably started the LGBT rights movement that we know today.

I have written this letter in my head a hundred times and put it on paper another 100 times. Writing a letter like this is hard following on the heels of the worst active shooting incident in the history of the United States, in a targeted campaign of terror against our LGBT brothers and sisters by a coward.

Pulse nightclub along with every other LGBT targeted establishment around the world was built and designed for one reason and one reason only – a safe space for LGBT folks to gather, enjoy themselves and most importantly, be who they are. That sense of safety and security is no longer.

On June 12th, 2016 at approximately 2 o’clock in the morning, that sense of safety was shattered and the screams from the victims and the gunshots from the offending weapon echoed across the world.

First responders from near and far attended this scene to assist the victims and families of those affected without any judgement. We need to do our best to recognize the heroic efforts of all the first responders involved and continue to assist them as time goes on.

It is important as leaders in our community to continue to be strong, sensitive, and understand the needs of our members regardless of what background they come from. It is also important that we recognize that as an organization, you may have many members who do not identify
openly as LGBT but are deeply affected by the tragedy that unfolded in Orlando. It is your responsibility as leaders of your organizations to provide the proper messaging that you stand with all communities in which you have sworn to serve.

For the past thirty years, Police leaders and LGBT community leaders have worked tirelessly to enhance the relationship between Police and the LGBT communities in which they serve. These relationships have assisted with overall officer safety, enhanced communications and community led intelligence to stop hate based violence before it happens.

We are asking that if you have any LGBT establishments or businesses that are LGBT friendly in your area to please spend some time doing community outreach. We invite you to meet with your community leaders, with your night clubs, coffee shops and businesses and tell them that you are there to help, that you have the appropriate tools to assist them in a time of need. Offer a hand, an ear, and provide them with the comfort that their establishment will still be a safe space for their patrons. With all of the above being said, it is equally important to reach out to your members.

On July 3rd, 2016 Toronto will be holding their annual Pride parade. Over one million people will come from around the world to join the citizens of the GTA and guests from all over to watch the parade precession which begins on Bloor Street and runs to Yonge and Dundas Square.

The Toronto Police Service, York Regional Police Service, Hamilton Police Service, the Ontario Provincial Police, RCMP (just to name a few) will be participating in this year’s parade. As the registration deadlines have already passed, we are inviting you to join our contingency and march in solidarity with your colleagues and show support for your LGBT community. Please send us an email if you are interested and we will do our best to place you with one of our supporting services.

Serving With Pride was formed in 2006 by a group of LGBT officers and allies to address the needs and concerns of our LGBT members in the Province of Ontario. We continue to work diligently to provide support and networking opportunities for all of our LGBT members from across the Province. As a result of the great work that our past Presidents have achieved, Serving With Pride has observed an increase in open and supportive workplaces including
creations of Internal Support Networks in services across the Province. What an outstanding show of support from our leadership!

If you need assistance with internal messaging, or have any questions please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Serving With Pride team.

May all of those who lost their lives in Orlando rest in peace, and may all of the communities in which we have sworn to serve feel safe and secure.

Yours Truly,

Brian Mitchell
President, Serving With Pride