

# Is it a boat, is it a plane ... no, it's the 'Partridge Family' bus

## Holiday parade entry to honor popular '70s singing sitcom

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When the annual Winterfest Boat Parade sails along the Intracoastal on Dec. 13, one of the entries cheered by crowds won't really be a watercraft at all.

Baby boomers will likely recognize the 48-foot "bus" decorated to resemble "The Partridge Family" bus as a salute to parade grand marshal David Cassidy, the teen idol who starred on the hit early 1970s TV sitcom.

"It was a natural this year to come up with this idea and it's been a lot of fun for us to pull it together," said Rob Kornahrens, whose craft will be in the parade for the seventh time since 1995. "We hope all those watching will get the same thrill we've had in creating the entry."

Actually it wasn't too much of a stretch to decorate the Partridge bus because the Kornahrens' craft is a bus — a 40-foot former Broward County Transit vehicle retired years ago to get a second shot as a floating craft.

About 12 years ago the Broward agency placed the bus on a custom designed boat frame so it could be a parade entry in the annual holiday event. But in 1992 the county decided to put the former bus up for sale. A local businessman bought it to turn into a floating restaurant but abandoned the idea because of the amount of governmental regulations involved in the project.

"When I joined the Winterfest board in 1995, someone suggested the idea of finding the bus again, so I went out and bought it," Kornahrens said.

He used it to promote his company, Advanced Roofing, Inc. in the Winterfest parade.

Over the years the boat has been redesigned as a giant sleight with reindeer, a pirate ship, a "Yellow Submarine" salute to the Beatles, and a September 11 memorial of fire-



Photo/WILLIAM HAWKINS  
Rob Kornahrens, right, is busy at work painting his "Partridge Family" bus-boat entry that will appear in both the Winterfest and Pompano Beach boat parades in mid December. At left are son, Mike, and wife, Deborah.

fighters raising the flag over the World Trade Center site.

It's taken an outpouring of funds and a lot of work for the Kornahrens family, which also includes Rob Kornahrens' wife, Deborah, and son, Mike, 20, a Florida Atlantic University student. Also helping out is family friend Rick Gunvaldsen, 17.

After docking the craft at a Pompano Beach marina in early November, the crew began to revamp the bus-boat in the image of the school bus used on the "Partridge Family" series. The family found a Hallmark Christmas tree ornament that looked just like the bus and they used it as a model.

"We rebuilt the front of the bus and added new siding to create the right shape," said Mike Kornahrens. Then they painted the craft in psychedelic colors. Over 750 laser lights will illuminate the bus along the parade route.

A live band aboard during the event will play Partridge Family songs. Over 25 participants will don 1970s clothing.

"Every year when we get through with the parade, we say that's it and we won't do it again," Rob Kornahrens said. "But then we get all excited again when December starts to roll around."

But the family has eased up by not entering every year. They did not participate in the 2000 and 2002 parades. "Every other year is enough," said Deborah Kornahrens.

The bus-boat has won top awards in the Winterfest and Pompano Beach holiday parades. This year's Partridge-themed entry will appear in the Winterfest parade on Saturday, Dec. 13 and in the Pompano Beach Holiday Boat Parade the next night on Dec. 14.

This year's Winterfest theme is "Once Upon A Time," with Cassidy aboard the grand marshal boat, which will be preceded by the Kornahrens' craft.

Cassidy lives in Fort Lauderdale with his wife, Susan, a songwriter. Recently he toured in a "Rat Pack is Back" show.