

HOMETOWN PRIDE

Not everyone will skip Eugene's pride celebration in favor of bigger events in larger cities by Jonathan Kipp

With "The New Millennium" as its theme, this year's installment of an annual celebration for sexual minority residents of the mid-Willamette Valley will take place June 25 in Eugene.

The ninth annual Eugene-Springfield Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Pride Day Celebration will run from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Maurie Jacobs Park. A \$5 donation is being requested.

"You can go to gay pride and then shop," jokes Kim Smith, a longtime pride-goer. (The park is steps away from Eugene's popular Valley River Center Mall.)

The event is sponsored by the Equality Project to foster a sense of community in the area. Organizers promise "old friends, new friends, food, entertainment, music and dancing."

Alan Brown, the event's coordinator, says it is going to be a much simpler celebration this year than in the past.

The Eugene-Springfield community needs to be pulled together and unified, Brown says. Since the demise of *Lavender Network*, a Eugene-based monthly periodical that had served as a cohesive factor in the area, the annual pride celebration is the only thing to pull the community together, he adds.



A pastoral setting for Eugene-Springfield pride

Organizers also recognize that the pride event conflicts with Portland's Peacock in the Park, an annual scholarship fund-raiser held in Washington Park. The event is Portland's second largest gay event and a popular one for people throughout the region.

Another factor is the conflict with the pride celebration in San Francisco.

Not so long ago, some organizers, including Brown, thought the Eugene-Springfield pride event might not come together at all. But Tim Matteson, a previous coordinator of the festival, says it always looks that way as the event nears.

Some individuals and groups stepped forward at the expo and volunteered to take on tasks, relieving Brown of some of the challenges at hand.

This year's event will be more interactive, Matteson says.

The OUTdoor Group will preside over volleyball and tug-of-war tournaments, for example. The Rainbow Wranglers Square Dance Club will give minilessons a few times during the day.

Harriet Merrick, chairwoman of the board of directors of Basic Rights Oregon, is scheduled to speak about upcoming political issues, including the Oregon Citizens Alliance's Student Protection Act, which is expected to appear on Oregon's November ballot.

Local organizations will, as usual, have booths at the event for people to visit. Musicians will perform from 4 to 7 p.m.

A children's play area will be set up to accommodate families, and the Kid's Bubble Parade will kick off at 11:30 a.m.

"A lot of lesbian mothers bring their kids," says Smith.

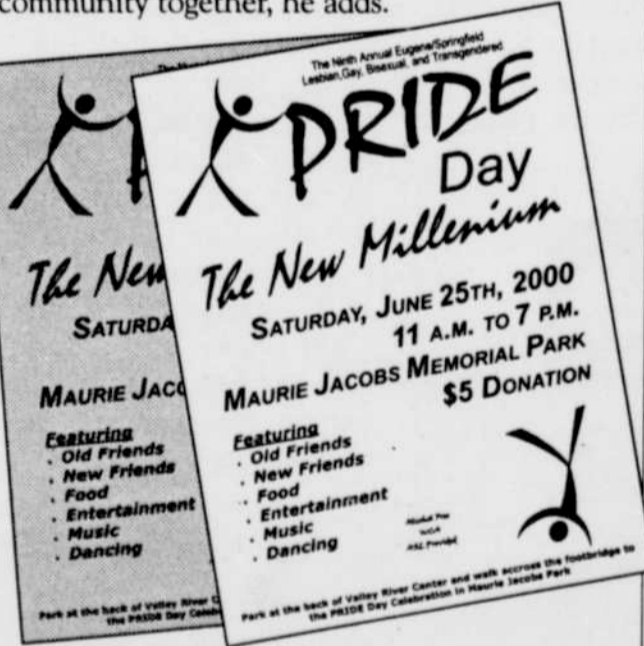
Eugene's pride celebration attracts mostly women. About one-third of the attendees are male, Smith says.

"I think it reflects the demographics," he explains.

More than 1,000 people are expected to attend the alcohol-free event this year.

A play, *I Paint your Face, Louise*, will follow the celebration at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are available on a sliding scale ranging from \$3 to \$10. The play is produced by Little Apple Productions.

■ For more information about the EUGENE-SPRINGFIELD LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDERED PRIDE DAY CELEBRATION, contact Alan Brown at (541) 688-1601.



Interested community members met at a Queer Expo in May to give their local pride celebration a "shot in the arm," according to Kim Smith, a member of the OUTdoor group who helped organize the shindig.

The expo served as an open forum to share ideas and concerns. Some who attended proposed a more child-friendly event for families. Smith says it was also suggested that the event could be made more enjoyable for preteens.

Brown feels that the Eugene-Springfield community seems disconnected to many gay men and lesbians, so they have a lackadaisical attitude about activism and social organizing. Others agree this malaise is the reason few people are getting involved in planning the event and that attendance isn't as high as some would like.

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