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NORTHWEST news

CAPITOL PRIDE

Salem stages a high-visibility celebration by Richard Bray



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

Confluence: The Willamette Valley Mixed GALA Chorus made the trip from Salem to the Rose City for Pride 2001; now it's time for Portlanders to return the favor

Although June traditionally is known as Pride Month in the gay community, things will be a little different in Salem this year. The newly dubbed Capitol Pride will be observed the weekend of Aug. 17 to 19. According to co-chair Dani Leis, recently available funding from Equity Foundation and administrative help from Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays made this event possible, although she's quick to add it hasn't left a lot of time for organizing.

Things kick off at 7 p.m. Aug. 17 with a dinner and show at the 300 Club located in Pringle Park Plaza. Tickets cost only \$9.95.

The keynote speaker will be Roey Thorpe, new executive director of Basic Rights Oregon. She will summarize the 2001 legislative session and outline BRO's vision for a discrimination-free Oregon.

Salem Mayor Mike Swaim also will speak, and entertainment will be provided afterward. Tickets are available from Ron Smith of the 300 Club at 503-365-9721.

A festival event will be held from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Aug. 18 in the plaza. It will feature information booths and a stage with entertainment and speakers.

A Youth Pride Party will welcome gay kids from Salem and the surrounding area that evening in the "Right Side Bar" at the 300 Club. Nonalcoholic beverages will be served.

As facilitator of Salem's Rainbow Youth organization, Leis is particularly sensitive to the needs of gay kids. She knew it was important to provide a place for them to celebrate Pride, not making it exclusively an adult event.

Leis thinks they deserve to be able to celebrate with the rest of the partygoers. "It's our kids that are out there in the community facing

the really hard challenges."

Of course, the over-21 crowd will have their own party in the "Left Side Bar" at the 300 Club. Alcohol will be served until the establishment closes down.

A queer picnic will be held 11 a.m. Aug. 19 on the Capitol lawn. Although Leis acknowledges the Legislature will not be in session, it still will be a high-visibility event.

She emphasizes Capitol Pride is not just a party, although there will be plenty of that as well. This event is geared toward politics.

Leis also is quick to add this is a celebration for the whole state, not just Salem. She encourages folks from throughout Oregon to visit the capital city to help recognize Pride. Her hope is that, even without a sitting Legislature, enough people will attend to send a political message.

Leis thinks this approach to Pride is particularly valid for Oregon because other states look up to us. "I've heard the reference that Oregon is held up nationwide as a role model by other states for fighting anti-gay initiatives. We've had lots of experience with past initiatives."

With a new name and renewed energy gained from this year's event, Leis anticipates enthusiasm for Capitol Pride will build, providing a catalyst for political events in the future.

It only takes an hour to drive from Portland to Salem. Try and find time the weekend of Aug. 17 to 19 to celebrate and motivate in Salem during Capitol Pride. **JM**

CAPITOL PRIDE is seeking vendors, entertainers, nonprofit booths and speakers. For more information call Dani Leis at 503-831-3278.



Roey Thorpe



Mike Swaim