

Nearly 50,000 people gathered together last month to celebrate Pride 2001 in Portland. That's a whole lot of folks who did a whole lot of celebrating.

The annual event has grown incredibly since its inception and has weaved itself into the fabric of Portland life. With its endless booths, top-notch entertainment and oh-so-enjoyable parade, Pride has distinguished itself as a one-of-a-kind event for the gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans population in not only the metro area but throughout the Pacific Northwest.

And don't forget the thousands of other "friends" who also gather each Father's Day weekend to join the party.

The fact that Pride comes together each year is something of a miracle when one considers not a single paid staff member works on it. For an event of its size to have an all-volunteer crew organizing it means some folks are donating a whole lot of time. It truly is a yearlong undertaking that never has enough volunteers and always struggles to put together a workable budget.

Have you ever wondered how it all comes together? Have you ever really looked at how Riverfront Park majestically is turned into a perfect pink paradise? Do you have any idea how hard it is to plan and coordinate a parade in downtown Portland?

Just Out recently sat down with festival chairwoman Linda Williams to talk about how Pride 2001 came to be, to find out what the board learned and to gain a smorgasbord of other information.

Tom Stevenson: Why is Pride always held during Father's Day weekend?

Linda Williams: The third weekend in June is the only weekend during the summer when we are able to both rent space in Waterfront Park and have a parade through downtown Portland. We have the right to that weekend because we have produced the event for many years at that specific time. All of the other events which happen in the city also have the right to their specific weekends. We could move the event to early spring or late fall, which we have considered on several occasions, but in the end it has seemed too far removed from Stonewall, and the weather becomes a very big concern.

TS: Why is the parade always held Sunday afternoon?

LW: We could move the parade back to Saturday. The Pride Northwest board chose to move the parade to Sunday afternoon several years ago because practicing Jews cannot march on Saturday. We found that many people preferred the march on Sunday, including people who work on Saturday. We continue to examine these decisions each year with the goal of making the event accessible to the greatest number of people. Please continue to send us your comments.

TS: So, when does the planning for Pride actually start each year?

LW: Oh, before we even talk about Pride weekend, you have to understand that from the first of the year on, the Pride Northwest board meets every other week for two hours in a full-force planning/action mode. The board also puts in an average of 40 hours per week during the last few weeks to make sure it comes together—and that's not including all of the other volunteers' efforts.

Starting in March, applications are made and sent out for the festival booths and the board. Solicitations are also sent out for entertainers and artists for the stages and Art Tent. And even before that, the process of getting sponsors and other fund-raising activities have started. All of that with 10 volunteer board members—a gallant, hardworking, creating, sincerely caring

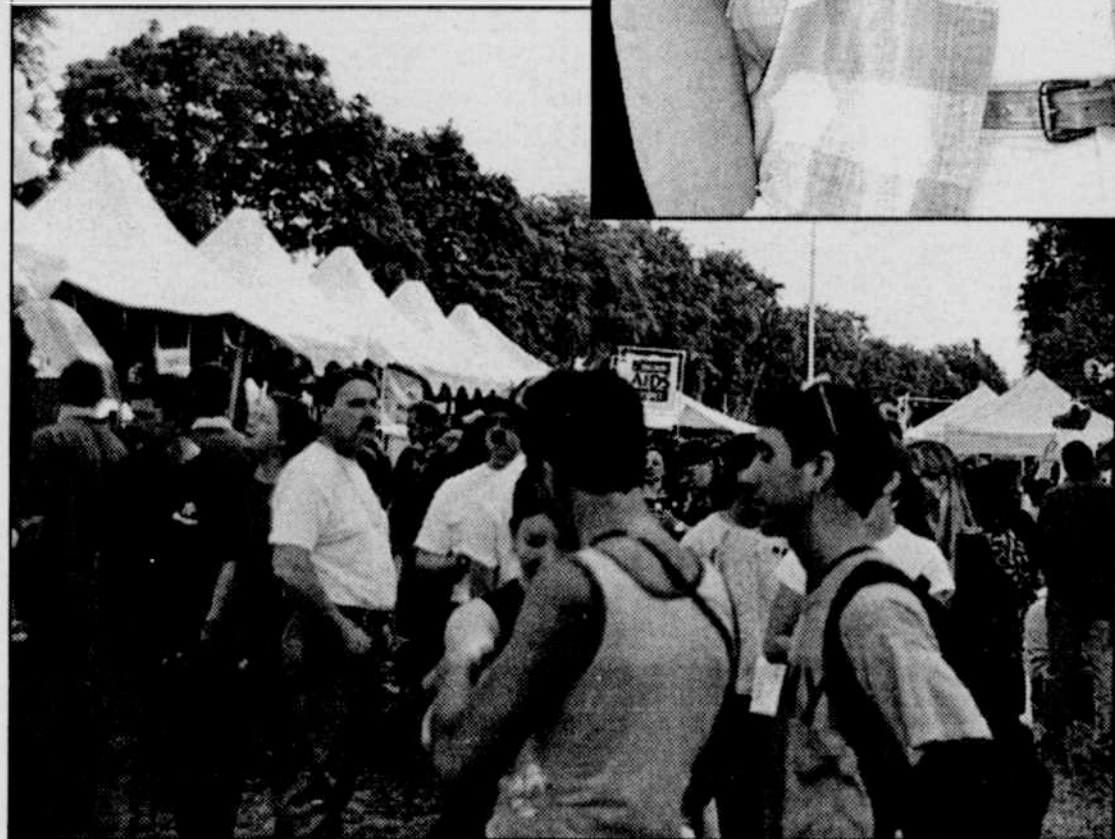
PRIDE Q & A

**Board member explains
how the festival
comes together
every year**

by Tom Stevenson



Board member Linda Williams has high praise for the hard-working people who volunteer with Pride Northwest



PHOTOS BY MARTY DAVIS

group. We are gays, lesbians, leather people, seniors, transgenders, Hispanics, drag queens, handicapped, bean counters and artists, people with structured jobs and people who are retired. It really is quite a team.

TS: Why do you keep asking us for money, and who exactly pays for Pride?

LW: It costs a lot of money to put Pride on. Our picnic in the park costs about \$65,000 each year. Some of our big expenses are for the following items:

1. Permits for the parade and Waterfront Park, which are close to \$10,000.
2. Renting tents, tables and chairs, which costs more than \$7,000.
3. Renting Porta-Pottys and Dumpsters, which is over \$3,000.
4. Insurance, which is about \$3,000.
5. Printing, which costs over \$5,000.
6. Security for the sound equipment and the artwork, which is over \$2,000.
7. Electricity, sound and staging equipment for the two stages, which costs about \$10,000.

You can see why money continues to be a worry.

Money comes from sponsorships, grants, donations from individuals, fund raising by the bars, the Royal Court, groups who do events for us, booth rentals, the beer garden and the bucket brigade. Money is really scary, as we never know what will be coming in, and we could sure use some help with fund raising. We're so busy doing the event, and most of us aren't very good at asking for money. We did make a little this year, which will help if we need it next year.

As for the booth rentals, some people worry about the cost. We offer them a big discount if they sign up by May 1 and a smaller one if they

sign up between May 1 and June 1. We also offer a \$30 discount if one member of the group/business is willing to volunteer four hours of time. We try to make it affordable, and we also try to make sure that everyone can get a space, but there are limits.

TS: OK, so let's talk about the actual event.

LW: The week before Pride, on Thursday morning at 5 a.m., seven volunteers armed with bio-friendly paint, 300-foot tape measure, a map and lots of caffeine started at one end of Waterfront Park, pounded in a stake and started measuring. By the time we were through, we outlined and numbered all 120 booths, the beer garden and all tent locations. This year it only took two hours because a friend who is a former surveyor helped us and a friend who is a computer design person did a computerized layout diagram. I was amazed. Oh, and [board member] Raphael [Arellano-Barra] had painted his beautiful black boots yellow with the spray paint—that's my one regret.

Oh, I almost forgot. We also got a hold of the park people minutes before they turned on the sprinklers, which would have erased all our work.

Then, Friday morning, the whole thing came together: Electricity, stages and sound are put in. The tent people, the food booth people, the Porta-Potty people and the garbage people all come in and do their thing. It's quite a flurry of activity. There were probably 50 to 60 people tripping over each other getting their festival tasks done.

Saturday morning we were up bright and early at 6 a.m. with an army of volunteers arriving at 8 a.m. to pass out tables and chairs, garbage cans or to do whatever else is needed. Then the vendors start arriving, and we had volunteers there ready to help unload their merchandise and equipment. By 11 a.m. 95 percent of the booths

were ready, and people were already arriving. The mini-doughnut ladies had already been filling us with coffee and luscious doughnuts for hours.

And then the festival begins.

On Sunday, while most of the board, volunteers and security were working on the parade, I was on the Waterfront, minding the house, so to speak. We had wonderful spiritual music by a trio, and SisterSpirit welcomed the spirit and blessed the event.

By noon things at the festival were hopping. Thousands of people were at Waterfront Park. The music was going on the stages. And when the parade arrived it was so wonderful, with the color and tens and thousands of people flooding the festival. The police estimated the parade had 50,000 participants and watchers.

Also on Sunday, the teardown is not a popular volunteer slot, but we had a special, special gift this year. Members of the Northwest Gender Alliance showed up in their gorgeous gowns and sparkling shoes and put on plastic gloves and started throwing away trash with the rest of us. It made me cry. While we were picking up the trash—there was so much trash—the tent people swarmed in and started moving things out. It was sunset when we finally gave each other a last hug and headed home.

TS: Did you run into any special problems this year?

LW: The "Jesus people" were there on Sunday, trying to show us the errors of our ways and condemn us to points south. We just brought a speaker from the beer garden for them so they could hear the music better. The police kept them silent during SisterSpirit's ceremony, for which we're grateful. As we have a permit to be on the park, we have rights. The Jesus people, except for one incident, stayed out of our permit area and away from the stage, again with the help of the police. Because we ignored them, they drifted away and did not return. That was the only interference we had, and there were not protesters at Pioneer Square, either.

The only other real problem is that we didn't have enough volunteers, especially on Sunday. But again, when the Northwest Gender Alliance showed up it just, well, it meant so much to all of us.

TS: Now that you have rested a little bit and hopefully regained your energy, tell us the three things on top of your wish list for Pride 2002.

LW: Well, the first thing would be that all of the local clubs and groups that make up our community would take a piece of Pride and be responsible for it. We need that kind of dedicated help.

My second wish would be that we could get a paid part-time staff person. All of the mailings, processing of permits, etc. could be handled by that person. We are big enough now, and that is something we really need.

I guess my third wish would be that we could afford to expand the festival to include a whole bunch of new things. We would like to have a health fair. It would be nice for all of the groups that make up the Rural Organizing Project...to have a space where they could set up and talk about what they're doing. But right now it is just too cost-prohibitive to expand. You wouldn't believe how much it costs. For us to expand just a little would cost about \$3,000 because of the fees we have to pay the city. There are just endless rules that apply that we have to follow if we want to keep the event.

So there you have it, a brief rundown on how Pride 2001 actually came to be. Anyone who would like to help put Pride 2002 together is more than welcome to join in the fun. ☐

For more information about PRIDE NORTHWEST visit the Internet site www.pridenw.org.