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NORTHWEST news

QUEER WE GO AGAIN!

Meet the Pride Northwest board of directors

by Tom Stevenson



From left, Pride Northwest president/parade coordinator Tobin Britton, staffer Ady Oren, sponsorship/volunteer coordinator Nicole Browning, festival coordinator Jeska Duckworth, entertainment coordinator Dave Whitney, vice president/security chief Patricia Muhlbaauer and treasurer/media director Joe Dressman

The board of directors of Pride Northwest, the organization that puts on Portland Pride each year, represent a kaleidoscope of personalities and profiles from the Rose City's sexual minorities community.

This year's celebration—running under the theme "Queer We Go Again!"—will be held June 19 and 20, with the bulk of activities being held at Tom McCall Waterfront Park. The ever-popular parade will wind its way through the streets of downtown June 20.

Putting together an event of this magnitude is neither easy nor cheap. It takes literally hundreds of volunteers putting in thousands of hours of hard work to make it happen. From the moment the festival ends, organizers are already beginning to think about improvements for the following year. There are always dollars to be found, security issues to be addressed, volunteers to be recruited...the list of tasks is endless.

Overseeing the entire endeavor is an elected board of directors, led this year by president Tobin Britton. The other board members are vice president/security chief Patricia Muhlbaauer, treasurer/media director Joe Dressman, entertainment coordinator Dave Whitney, festival coordinator Jeska Duckworth and sponsorship/volunteer coordinator Nicole Browning.

All of the board members have jobs and volunteer with many other organizations in addition to Pride Northwest. But for their own personal reasons they have chosen to play a prominent part in planning Portland Pride 2004. Here is a brief glimpse at who these leaders are.

Tobin Britton is a longtime volunteer with Pride Northwest who moved into the presidential role after some board members resigned. She originally signed on to be the parade coordinator, which she will still do, but when the top spot was offered, she accepted the challenge.

"I have varied duties," Britton says, "which include outreach, supervision of the various departments as well as being responsible for the parade lineup. Fund raising and board management are a couple other duties that come in as president."

Britton works as a maintenance supervisor for a property management firm in Portland and

has long been involved in the lesbian leather community, holding a number of titles through the years. She has seen Portland Pride grow through the years and encourages everyone to participate.

"There are various aspects that evolve and grow each year, from the entertainment to how the political climate is," she says. "This year Oregon is at the center of some very political issues, and it is an election year, so all of that will be felt throughout the weekend. We worked hard to make sure to address the issues facing our community yet to still let everyone have fun and celebrate."

For those who have never attended a Pride event before, Britton offers a special invitation to come and check it out.

"It's the people...all the wonderful queer people with all their similarities and differences going through the same struggles for equality and inclusion," she says. "I would have [newcomers] come out and just walk around and feel the energy. It is infectious."

Patricia Muhlbaauer, like Britton, wears a number of different hats at Pride Northwest. She is not only vice president of the organization but also a member of the entertainment committee.

Muhlbaauer's primary responsibility, however, is safety and security. "I'll be happy if we pull Pride off without any major incidents and that people have fun and stay safe," she says.

Muhlbaauer, who works as an on-call monitor for a community corrections center, first volunteered with Pride in 1996. "I liked what I saw and thought I could bring my experience in safety and security to the celebration," she says. "I wanted my voice to be heard, and the best way to do that was join the board."

According to Muhlbaauer, the board has worked hard during the past year to not only address community concerns about Pride but also to honor the incredible gains made recently by queers in Portland.

"There are many new faces on the board," she says. "We've listened to the concerns of the community, made several changes and are trying out some new things. This year we have many more reasons to come together and celebrate. If