

The Spirit of Pride

Local luminaries celebrated for community contributions
by Sarah Dougher

As they mount the stage around 5:30 p.m. June 18 at Waterfront Park, you will see some familiar faces among this year's award recipients.

This year's Spirit of Pride Awards, recognizing contributions to the community Pride celebrations, honor Poison Waters and Kraig and Barbara Bartel.

"These are people who have gone above and beyond the call of community service," notes Tobin Britton, president of the 2005 Pride Northwest board. "They are always there, even when it gets hot and dusty and we wonder why we're still doing it."

The Spirit of Pride Award recipients were nominated by the community via the Pride Northwest Web site, and then voted on by the board as a whole.

The Champion of Pride Award, given last year for the first time, recognizes sustained commitment to the community.

"It is a little like a lifetime achievement award for the people and organizations who have consistently given their time and energy to benefit the community," says Nicole Browning, sponsorship coordinator for the board.

This year, Peacock in the Park and Vera Katz will be honored. Receiving the award on

behalf of Peacock in the Park will be Maria XXXVI, one of last year's hosts for the now-defunct drag celebration, which enjoyed an 18-year run.

We Came to Pride to Honor a Friend, and Stayed: Thoughts by Kraig and Barbara Bartel of Estacada, recipients of the Spirit of Pride Award

We were very surprised and honored to receive the Spirit of Pride Award.

We started working on the security crew at the festival and parade 12 years ago as a way to honor the memory of our friend, Jon Bund. He was a friend of Kraig's at Sam Barlow High School and was taken by AIDS long before we were ready to let him go.

On the first anniversary of his passing, we were trying to make sense of our loss. When we read an article in *Just Out* about the need for volunteers, we decided to step up and try to fill a space that he would have taken if he had been here.



Kraig and Barbara Bartel

We were accepted with warmth and appreciation, and our experience that first year was so rewarding that we have returned every year. We can't imagine a time when we won't participate on whatever level we are able!

During one of our early years, we were assigned to work on one corner of Pioneer Square, and as fate would have it, the protesters chose the same corner to make their stand. It was during Measure 9, and the atmosphere was heated.

That day was a trial and a spiritual awakening for both of us. To be given the job of protecting the bigots from the community was more difficult than we could ever have imagined!

We found ourselves defending freedom of speech, from the other side!

It was very difficult to reason with the PFLAG grandmas who wanted to kick the protesters' asses and to discourage the street kids from throwing cups of urine on them. But we prevailed with words of wisdom and wit, and the parade was uninterrupted by any violence.

That year, we came home mentally exhausted from the anger and hate that had flowed over us (in both directions) all that day. But we

emerged, renewed in our belief that in America we really do have the right to freedom of speech.

We were proud that we had the calm nature, and good sense, to prevail over both sides, without causing even more trouble!

Since we had always tended more in the direction of "rabble-rouser," we were both surprised to find our success as "peacekeeper"! We saw it as an indication of personal growth. We thank Pride Northwest for the opportunity!

Through the years, we have been encouraged to find that the protesters are always the same small group, with the same devoted leader. Theirs is not a point of view that is widespread or growing, and their protest in the past few years has been more symbolic than active...they just can't stay away, any more than we can!

There's no need for us to act out defensively! Many of us were able to actually welcome the protesters with an open heart, and that is the true meaning of our search for diversity, after all. What everyone seeks is peace in their own hearts. If we can find that, we win.

Important cultural changes take time. We are in it for the duration. We feel lucky to have the chance to participate in our own small way.

The Pride Northwest board of directors puts in many hours all year-round. We appreciate them more than they can know. The festival is an event that means a lot to so many people, and it couldn't happen without the dedication of a few leaders and many volunteers. We are grateful to be included in their numbers. We are honored to receive the Spirit of Pride Award.

Poison Waters Honored for Community Involvement with Spirit of Pride Award

"Community involvement is not my overwhelming goal," notes Poison Waters, aka

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