

## NORTHWEST news

**P**ride Northwest, the group that puts on Portland Pride each year, ran a half-page ad in *Just Out* the week after the festival. It invited community members to participate in an evaluation of last month's event and to help lay the foundation for 2006.

With the room number listed neither in the ad nor on the Pride Northwest Web site, it is not surprising that only one person was in attendance on the evening of July 13.

A perennial problem for the board, this lack of participation seemed a result of both self-sabotage as well as a community that frankly does not care about the organization of its Gay Pride celebration. This community would certainly miss it if it were gone.

The aim of the debriefing session was to review the specific aspects of Pride '05 with a view to putting on something similar next year. The poor turnout begged the question: Is Pride '06 even feasible? Is this how our community should be spending thousands of hard-acquired dollars? Does anybody care?

## PARADE

Despite flak about the new parade route, it proceeded with few problems and spurred the merchants of Stark Street to put on a well-attended street party June 19.

The parade had 125 contingents, each of whom paid \$25 to be there. The limit of two vehicles per contingent was often ignored, most egregiously by the various courts. Board members discussed raising these fees, especially for contingents that are for-profit businesses.

## FESTIVAL

The festival grounds had three gates, which proved too few June 19, and the board discussed options for streamlining the process of entrance

## SHOULD WE CANCEL PRIDE?

**Low volunteer turnout suggests changes are imperative**

by Sarah Dougher

and collecting donations. This led to a discussion of the volunteer power at Pride this year.

Although it takes approximately 100 volunteers to make Pride run smoothly, this year there were 30, and only eight who showed up for the whole weekend.

"There are lots of good ideas about how to make it better and run more smoothly," commented board president Tobin Britton, "but we lack the manpower."

One community group complained to the board that the fees for the booths were too high for some nonprofits to pay. These fees are between \$63 and \$150 for nonprofit vendors and between \$81 and \$225 for for-profit vendors. The board discussed the possibility of creating a scholarship for nonprofits that could not pay by using space designated for larger sponsors that don't use their festival booths.

## BEVERAGE SALES

All agreed that the walk-around liquor license worked out well, and there were no alcohol-related incidents. The walk-around license had the added benefit of allowing drinkers to sit down to watch the entertainment, improving both the experiences of audience and performer.

There was a lack of water, and at times the soda stands lacked ice. The Gay Fuel booth was a particular hit, selling out early and sharing its

profit 50-50 with Pride Northwest.

## FOOD SALES

Although this year the board had planned to get community members to come forward for a kind of "Gay Bite of Portland" feel in the concession area, no one came forward to participate, so the board was left with a limited number of choices at the last minute. All agreed that there should have been more variety, including better vegetarian food.

The majority of vendors sold out of their wares, indicating there is money to be made in the selling of food at the festival, with the major expense being a set fee and electricity costs.

There were some discrepancies about food vendors not following the rules that they were given—for example, not staying in their assigned spot and compromising the festival's liquor license by taking down part of the perimeter fence early. The board talked about creating clearer rules along with repercussions for their infringement in the future.

## ENTERTAINMENT

The major gaffe in this year's planning was the lack of American Sign Language interpretation for the event. In addition, the headliners, The Retros, were late getting on stage, went over their time and were generally obnoxious to



Pride Northwest board president Tobin Britton (left) and sponsorship coordinator Nicole Browning address the crowd at Pride '05.

the festival crew. Considering they were paid \$2,500, it was a disappointment for the board. Although most artists play for free, Lynn Frances Anderson, the Molly Paige Band and Magdalen Hsu-Li were paid.

The board gets about 200 submissions for entertainment each year and has to put together a lot of programming on a fairly limited budget.

## WRAP-UP

It was agreed that the planning process for Pride needs to be more transparent and community-based. The Pride Northwest board has joined the Portland Area Business Association in hopes of gaining greater local business support in the coming year.

Where changes happened in 2005, the results were generally good. The board agreed, however, that more changes would have to be made if no one steps forward to help run the festival.

Considering the festival is a celebration of community visibility and strength, it is ironic that more people don't step in to either support it or to determine viable alternatives.

What if there was no Pride? 



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