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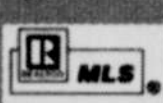
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The first arts and culture roundtable for Q Center included, from left, researcher Melinda Hines, writer Georgia Lee Hussey, filmmaker David Weissman, board member Tim Healea, Gertrude editor Jedidiah Chavez, visitor Victor Chavez, painter Paul Fukui, volunteer Angela Martin and peer executive director Beth Burns (seated). Not pictured: interim executive director Susan Remmers, gallery owner Charles Froelick and Sarah Dougher.

Q Center Update

Oh where is this elusive entity?

by Sarah Dougher

You know it exists, but where?
You know it is happening, but how?
Portland's Q Center is gaining momentum and will shortly announce an interim site to house the organization as it grows into new digs. The interim space will be smallish (2,000 to 3,000 square feet) and close-in on the east side. The board of directors is still negotiating the details.

The board is having ongoing meetings with service providers and community organizations that are potential stakeholders in the existence of a new queer community center. These meetings, according to board members Nicole Browning and Tim Healea, are meant to cultivate connections with the grassroots queer community that already exists, so that the wheel need not be reinvented, nor the toes of the tender trod upon.

"It is important to us that the community has a role in shaping the vision of the center," notes Browning. "Otherwise, it wouldn't really be a community center."

January will see a service provider roundtable convened to assess existing community resources and potential partnerships with the new center.

As of December, Q Center is in the process of securing an interim home close-in on the east side of Portland. This site will serve as the home of the center as it rolls out a capital campaign with the goal of gaining a larger, permanent location (in the 7,500- to 10,000-square-foot range). The idea is that Q Center will co-locate with other organizations and businesses in the new space.

For the time being, however, the interim space will have limited hours and concentrate on testing out some of the community-directed programming that will form the basis for the center's eventual full-time activities.

"We want to make sure that we work with ideas of sustainability and intentionality, so that our growth is manageable and that we serve community in a way that ensures our ongoing and mutual success," says Healea.

So far, Q Center has put on "Spooktacular," a much-lauded family Halloween event in October. Dec. 6 brings "Generation Q: Past, Present, Future—A Q Center Community Convening," which will take

place from 6 to 8:30 p.m. at Urban Grind Coffeehouse, 2214 N.E. Oregon St.

The goal of this gathering will be to engage queers of all ages to share stories of local history, honor past achievements and hear ideas for future community building. Because the event is around the holidays, it will be social and fun and not too overwhelming, but still a place to gather input and ideas.

Panelists for the event include Darcelle and partner Roxy LeRoy; Jerry Weller, who describes himself as an old activist gay man; Kay Sohl, longtime member of the lesbian community; and Bailey Oliver Brandt, genderqueer youth, slam poet and spoken word artist.

Photos and artifacts will be on view during the event, and participants will be able to submit writings in a large journal. A video camera will be set up in a separate room for people to share their stories, so that the archive of Q Center can be initiated.

Volunteers are still needed for the event. Those interested should contact Carol Cheney at 503-239-4001, ext. 112, or carol.cheney@comcast.net.

A capital campaign, as those involved in the non-profit sector know, can be a daunting fiscal challenge. The Q Center board is confident, however, that the energy and momentum already demonstrated by the community will continue and translate into the much-needed dollars to develop a full-fledged center.

"We have over 1,700 people on our e-mail list," notes Browning, "and many of the people on this list are first-time donors—they haven't given to anything ever before. I think we've struck a chord with community members. The Q Center is personal and something people think they can utilize."

In addition to grassroots support, the center's board members hope to recruit community members to host house parties. They are also having ongoing discussions with major donors, many of whom have been involved in the project from the beginning. The board has committed significant resources to the project as well.

If everything goes according to plan, the center will move into the interim space next month, with a series of open houses to welcome the community. Watch the pages of *Just Out* for more information as it unfolds. Meanwhile, visit the Q Center blog at www.pdxqcenter.org. **JO**