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Q Calls Bingo

Bingo has been the signature success for the social subcommittee at Q Center. The event, held from 7 to 9 p.m. on first Mondays, draws approximately 50 people looking to win exciting prizes and have casual, high-spirited fun.

Poison Waters and her banter with the crowd has been a highlight of bingo, as has its ability to draw in people with different interests and of varying age groups and genders.

The event is also a fund-raiser for Q Center, bringing in \$5 a head to cover operating expenses.

The prizes—often donated by Darcelle XV, Pearl Bakery, the Portland Trail Blazers and BodyVox—have proven to be well worth the cover charge.

"Bingo provides a social outlet for the community that isn't a bar situation," said Healea. "It's a place where people can cross different lines."

Q Center also offers its space to community groups nearly every night of the week, outside of its own programming. The center has proven to be a social outlet for those attending Lesbian Country Dancing, an upcoming prom for the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC) and a new game night from 7 to 9 p.m. on first Tuesdays.

Getting Healthy, Staying Well

At Q Center, health and wellness programming is all about reaching out to organizations to be part of an information and referral program. Representatives from Cascade AIDS Project, Outside In, the Multnomah County Health Department, Q-LAND

and others gather at Q Center three times a year for a social services roundtable. According to Healea, the topic in February was body image, and the forum drew 35 attendees from a variety of organizations. "We're focused on providing space for social service providers to come together and network," says Healea. For example, the Women on Wellness Coalition Forum, which is not organized by Q Center volunteers, makes use of the community space, where it meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month. Q Center has also hosted yoga and Qi Gong classes and personal safety trainings for sexual minorities.

"We struck gold in visioning the center as a hub where people connect," says Healea, who stepped down temporarily from his position as board co-chairman to serve as interim coordinator. "It's true that in Portland, we don't need a center for survival like in other, less welcoming cities. However, I think there are some specific areas a center can address. We've been overwhelmed by requests for usage of the space and information about what's going on and for art, family and health and wellness programs." In the future, Healea says he hopes to continue building Q Center's infrastructure and get more people through its doors.

Finding Their Voices

The cornerstone event for sexual minority elders at Q Center is Senior Life Stories, a coffee and tea hangout held from noon to 2 p.m. on third Sundays.

This event is an offshoot of Community Voices, a Q Center event held in December 2005 with the Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest.

Attendees heard from prominent community members speaking about poignant periods in their lives.

Healea describes the event as an intimate place for older people in the community to connect.

Speakers are sometimes invited to the event, such as a financial expert who led a seminar on estate planning in March.

Other Q Center events have appealed to sexual minority seniors, such as the art exhibit *Historic Images of Our Portland* and various health and wellness events.

Senior programming is probably the least developed of all the subcommittees, according to Healea. A challenge to developing senior programming for the center is reaching the seniors. The center primarily relies on electronic media for its inexpensive and reliable qualities, but the senior set is not often computer savvy.

"The seniors programming is sort of at an infancy stage," says Healea. The senior subcommittee has been reaching out to sexual minority seniors by contacting welcoming churches such as the Community for Welcoming Congregations and gay and lesbian senior groups including the Elder Resource Alliance and Senior Housing and Retirement Enterprises.

Questioning Youth

Jonathan Weedman was a whiz at youth programming when he was approached by the Q Center board. The program manager at SMYRC and a child and family therapist seemed like the natural person to help design youth-oriented activities at the community center.

One thing that Weedman knew from his six



David Martinez and Mary Lee Turner staff the Q Center booth at Portland Pride 2005.

years at SMYRC was that youth must be involved in the process.

That's why the youth subcommittee is concentrating its energy on a needs assessment questionnaire before moving forward with planning events. The committee has designed an open-ended survey to poll queer people younger than 23 about simple issues such as whether they want the use of Q Center and whether there are barriers to access.

"We're slowing ourselves down because we don't want to throw youth programming out there before we have all the facts," he says. "We want to be thoughtful about the process, to build for success."

Weedman also has an eye on ensuring that services between SMYRC and Q Center do not overlap.

"Q Center wanted to focus on social aspects, a space where youth could come and hang out in. It's not about services, it's about connections," he says.

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