

culture

'Every Day Is a Revolution'

Women of size rally and celebrate

by Julie Stegall

Calling all voluptuous, plus-sized, big-boned women and those who love them! Stacy Bias is back with her celebrated Fat Girl Speaks, a show designed to "uplift and celebrate women of size and our allies."

Absent for the past two years, the event returns to the Portland State University campus with a diverse selection of groups, from belly-dancing and burlesque to live musical performances and cheerleading. "This year we tried to get a little of everything," says Olivia McClelland, Fat Girl Speaks planning coordinator.

She has been on the planning committee for Fat Girl Speaks since seeing a flier for the event in 2003. From its inception, the group has been an avenue for the size acceptance community to celebrate themselves in a world that is critical of them.

According to McClelland, the first event was more political, focusing on education and visibility of Portland's "big beautiful women community." She admits, "We only expected 100 to 150 or so to show up." It was a huge success, having turned those same numbers away after selling out. Performers were invited to the next year's event, and word quickly spread throughout the community.

After the first few years, the planning committee burned out, and the production was shelved. Last year, during the initial stages of planning, the committee decided to resurrect Fat Girl Speaks and placed its energies into creating an event that is scaled back from what was originally anticipated.

This year's theme is "Every Day Is a Revolution!" which speaks to the statement women of size make every day in a hypocritical society that expects indulgence while fitting into a size zero. Though the event will feature more entertainment than politics, the message is clear.

"Living in the world as a person of size is a revolutionary act," says Bias, who describes herself as a "Swiss Army dyke." She has a number of projects dedicated to fat activism, including a Fat Girl Speaks book that she is researching. Additionally, she is an entrepreneur, the operator of DykeTees.com and the manufacturer of Pussy Pucker Pots.

Bias' focus, though, is people. "I want people to be happy," she says as the reason for her fat activism. "There are so many lies being sold to us each and every day—so many ways that the media and big industry seek to tell us we are lesser-than, and then to sell us products that promise falsely to make us better than everyone else, or at least better than we are."

McClelland has become the point person for this year's event as plans are finalized. Her philosophy toward body politics is: "It's my body, so let me be."

Though having tremendous support from the lesbian community, Fat Girl Speaks aims to address all communities.

The event will kick off with a fashion show, featuring local independent designers who are committed to pushing the envelope when it comes to the industry and catering to big grrls, bois,

femmes, butches and transgender people alike.

Dressing a diverse group of women from XL to 6X, the designs run the gamut from casual to fetish wear. The show

will include lingerie, swimwear, casual and formal wear, focusing on couture, an element not normally ascribed to full-figured women.

"We want the models to feel good and the people to feel good," says Sossity Chiricuzio, coordinator of the fashion show and owner of the clothing line Diesel Femme, which will be featured in the show.

Outfitting the models in designs of local independent artisans such as Size Queen, Hips and Curves and Fashion Overdose, her goal is to encourage and empower women to wear what feels good to them, without someone else's labels and definitions of what fat women should wear.

Tit Totes and Sock Dreams will join Diesel Femme as vendors during the event, providing a number of items seen on the runway for immediate purchase.

Additionally, members of the naturopathic community will be on hand to promote size acceptance. A self-care information booth will include a massage



Clockwise from top left, Shawn Mathis, Jenny Bruso, Sossity Chiricuzio, Amethyst Fist, Domi Shoemaker, Olivia McClelland and Stacy Bias plan subversive fun for the Fat Girl Speaks event June 9.

therapist, chiropractic services and a practitioner providing in-home feminine care services.

Performers include Nedra Johnson, FatAssPDX Cheerleaders, Sahara Dunes and Fatty and the Hamslappers.

The event is financed in part by proceeds from the Cupcake dances held on the third Sunday of every month at Holocene. **IC**

FAT GIRL SPEAKS takes place from 6 to 10 p.m. June 9 at Portland State University's Smith Memorial Student Union Ballroom, 1825 S.W. Broadway. The fashion show starts at 7. Tickets are \$16.50 from Ticketmaster. For more information visit www.fatgirlspeaks.com.

JULIE STEGALL divides her time between work, school and family. Her passions include writing and dancing. Contact her with comments at asima817@aol.com.

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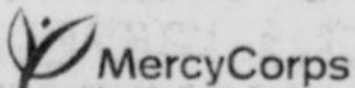
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WEEK

Peacemakers (pes'ma'kers) noun

persons, groups or nations that try to make peace

The Peacemakers, the final concert of the Portland Gay Men's Chorus 27th Season, will present the world premiere of *BraveSouls and Dreamers*, a bold and timely new work about the devastating realities of war, its consequences on families, and the ongoing pursuit of peace.

Artistic Director Bob Mensel describes *BraveSouls and Dreamers* as "compelling, the music rich, and the words - often - strident and provoking." The concert will be hosted by Governor Barbara Roberts and will also include compelling and memorable works previously written for PGMC. A portion of the ticket sales will be donated to Mercy Corps.



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