

# northwest

## Wedding Expo Is Gay-Friendly

Hundreds of same-sex couples are expected to engage in domestic partnerships when House Bill 2007 goes into effect in January 2008.

You can plan ahead by participating in the Rainbow Wedding Network summit, Portland's first queer "bridal expo."

The Rainbow Wedding Network presents "Same Love, Same Rights" Oct. 7 at the Waterfront Marriott, which promises to create "an atmosphere of elegance as well as activism."

Basic Rights Oregon and *Just Out* are sponsoring the event, and more than 100 vendors are specializing in everything from the ceremony itself to travel, home and family planning.

Cindy Sproul, who founded the Web site RainbowWeddingNetwork.com in 2000—an era when the concept of same-sex marriage still seemed far-fetched—has visited Portland to confer with vendors and sponsors and get the word out about the event. She also made a stop at Salem's Capitol Pride festival.

In the past, she said, gay and lesbian couples have faced awkwardness in attending heterosexual-oriented bridal expos, uncertain whether vendors would be willing to work with them. In this expo, she said, all vendors have been prescreened to be gay-friendly, although the businesses are not necessarily gay-owned. As one of the wealthiest minorities, according to statistics, queer couples have a unique opportunity to make a statement.

"If you spend your money with businesses who are gay-friendly, that's your first line of activism," Sproul said.

A spirit of activism shows another area of distinction from traditional bridal expos. Rather than a simple display of vendors, the expo presents a message of equality. Sproul said that even couples who are not planning a domestic partnership ceremony could attend the event to rally for marriage rights and network with gay-friendly businesses, she stressed, noting the effort under way to send domestic partnership rights to the ballot.

This will be the 16th gay wedding expo thrown by the Rainbow Wedding Network since its first in Minneapolis four years ago. Along with its Web site, which Sproul founded with her partner, the business has been a runaway success, earning national visibility in *USA Today* and other mainstream publications. The Web site offers resources in all 50 states, linking users to more than 5,000 companies.

Success came as something of a surprise to Sproul, who told readers of *Gay.com* that people used to laugh at her when she distributed literature about planning gay weddings.

Given the new attention to queer unions in Oregon recently, it shouldn't come as a surprise that the response has been tremendous so far. "I wish all cities were this responsive," Sproul said.

For more information contact the Rainbow Wedding Network at 866-251-1564.

## business watch



Vintage entrepreneur William Hicks provides a window into Portland's queer history.

"The vintage eyewear has been doing well," says Hicks of his Hollywood store's inventory. "People pick out vintage glasses—Buddy Hollys and cat eyes—and get prescription lenses put in them." In fact, in Hicks' estimation, the store boasts over 1,000 vintage frames—"four or five showcases' worth." He admits he buys much of his stock from eBay, noting that the problem with doing so, for the individual consumer, is that "you have no idea if they'll fit until you try them on."

Hawthorne Vintage, located at 4722 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd., is the other store Hicks has owned for about five years. It allegedly houses the largest collection of midcentury modern vintage furniture and housewares in the state: 5,000 square feet of yesterday's treasures, representing the collections of at least 10 different dealers.

While you're shopping, you might want to spend some time chatting with Hicks, who, in addition to being an out gay Portland business owner, is a living slice of history, particularly for the local queer community. Back in 1977, he started a gay youth group that organized fundraisers to support the city's then-incipient gay rights movement.

That involvement led Hicks to an interview in *The Northwest Gay*

*Review*, one of the earliest gay newspapers in Oregon, then to partial ownership of Mildred's Palace, the first incarnation of the Portland all-ages gay nightclub later known as the Metropolis and, most infamously, The City.

Mildred's Palace, still remembered fondly by disenfranchised survivors now advanced in years, occupied the second-floor ballroom of the historic Pythian Building (next door to Art Media), which now houses the Adrianna Hill Grand Ballroom, available to rent for weddings, with any mention of its past as the focal point of Portland's gay youth subculture conspicuously absent.

For more information call 503-230-2620.

## New Mixed Bar Closes

When Bent Bar opened in March, longtime Portland lesbian Joanne Stahl and her gay friend David Lewis aimed to open a bar for a mixed queer crowd.

The pleasant pub with a delicious food menu, strong karaoke following and friendly crew closed Sept. 15. The remote location at 633 S.E. Powell Blvd. might have contributed to the lack of success, although Stahl tells a different story.

"David just overspent, and he spent us into the ground without paying bills," she said. "He was hiding them on me. He was telling me everything was taken care of, and because it was a 30-year friendship, I believed him."

Lewis repeatedly hung up on *Just Out's* calls requesting comment.

Stahl says she will return to retirement. She wishes to thank patrons and her staff of dedicated bartenders and cooks. 10

By JAYMEE R. CUTI, SEAN HAYES and TONY LETIGRE



Cindy Sproul watched the concept of a gay-focused wedding expo develop from far-fetched to reality.

## Tales to Tell (and to Sell)

If you're an Oregonian in the market for high-end vintage furniture, accessories, housewares or clothing, you'll definitely want to spend time at the two stores owned by William Hicks.

"History is what I'm all about," says Hicks, who started up the first store, Hollywood Vintage, about 10 years ago, "by moving everything from my house into the store." Located at 2800 N.E. Sandy Blvd., and formerly known as Gilgamesh Antiques, the store specializes in men's vintage streetwear, dress-ups and hats spanning the decades from the '20s to the '90s, plus glamour-wear for ladies both authentic and fabricated. That is to say, a plethora of glamorous frocks, rhinestone jewelry, necklaces, crowns and tiaras in sizes ranging from Smurfette to Darcelle, from early Jazz Age to the New Wave '80s (and prematurely nostalgic '90s).



Gay patrons said goodbye to Bent Bar on Sept. 15.

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