

northwest

BRO Gala Was a Political Affair

Basic Rights Oregon's 26th annual gala, themed "Metamorphosis," honored community organizers, civil rights pioneers and pro-gay politicians and even flew in a surprise guest Oct. 11.

High school teacher Peggy Burton, who sued



Peggy Burton presented Basic Rights Oregon's Fighting Spirit Award to attorney Charlie Hinkle, who fought the state's first gay civil rights case for her in 1972.

the Cascade School District in Turner in 1972 after being fired for being a lesbian, introduced Fighting Spirit Award winner Charlie Hinkle. Hinkle was the attorney who argued for Burton in Oregon's first gay civil rights case. Burton now lives in Illinois.

The Oregon Convention Center ballroom teemed with political candidates, with appearances by state House Speaker Jeff Merkley, D-Portland; state Sen. Kate Brown, D-Portland; Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian; attorney general candidate John Kroger; and others.

Community leaders honored were Jo Casselberry, Frank Roa, Jeanne St. John, Erin Walsh, Tobi Hill-Meyer, Teri Noble and Leslie Stone.

The event, hosted by The Buzz 105.1 FM radio personalities Daria O'Neill and Mitch Elliott and songstress Storm Large, raised \$250,000, which was \$16,000 shy of the fund-raising goal. Approximately 930 attended, up from 835 last year.

The gala also raised \$4,500 for California's No on 8 campaign, bringing BRO's donations to defend same-sex marriage in the state to more than \$10,000.

Merkley Pinch-Hits for Smith at Portland AIDS Walk

After a series of conflicting messages and "crossed wires," the 22nd annual Portland AIDS Walk was saved Oct. 12 from some potential political drama.

In an Oct. 4 press release from Cascade AIDS Project announcing the walk's featured speakers, one politically charged name especially stood

out on the list: U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore. According to the release, he was scheduled to speak at the walk's morning kickoff event alongside fellow U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and Mayor-elect Sam Adams and, furthermore, that he'd be sharing the stage with dignitaries including his opponent for the hotly contested general election Senate race, Oregon House Speaker Jeff Merkley, D-Portland. Smith's scheduled appearance was first reported Oct. 6 on the Just Out blog.

That political drama would be saved for another time, as less than 72 hours after announcing and defending Smith's speaking engagement, despite his contentious relationship with the Oregon queer community, CAP—citing a "crossed wire" with Smith's office in Washington, D.C.—suddenly had a new kickoff speaker lined up to replace Smith at the walk: none other than Merkley.

Merkley seemed to acknowledge the behind-the-scenes turmoil that landed the candidate on-stage to speak in place of his opponent, saying, "You all know this is a nonpartisan gathering this morning" to applause and laughter from the Pioneer Courthouse Square crowd. He also used the opportunity to take swipes at Smith without mentioning him by name, and to be cheered on by supporters, Wyden and Adams among them.

Peacock Productions Brings 'A' Game

Peacock Productions is working on a video from its Sept. 13 event, Peacock After Dark.



Peacock After Dark performer Meesha Peru was caught before showtime in her dressing room Sept. 13 at Newmark Theatre.

Peacock in the Park, a wildly successful outdoor picnic with live entertainment that ended a 10-year run in 2004, was replaced by the indoor, upscale Peacock After Dark. Although the new show did not bring the crowds of its predecessor, organizers are confident that more people will come next year.

"The show was amazing. Everybody brought their 'A' game," said Kimberlee Van Patten, a core organizer of both events.

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