

northwest

Glitter and Be Gay!

Sam Adams and Q Center are putting the gay in 'gala'
by Stephen Marc Beaudoin

Sam Sam Sam! Gay gay gay! If it hasn't yet been knocked into your noggin that recently installed Portland Mayor Sam Adams is, in fact, a homosexual, then there's gotta be a screw loose somewhere. You simply can't read any of the voluminous media coverage about the man—whether it's in *Just Out*, *Portland Monthly* or *Out*—without hearing about his history-making place as the only openly gay mayor of a major U.S. city.

And although Adams himself likes to keep his homo-status in check—the phrase “I don't want to be a gay mayor, I want to be a good mayor” has become a type of leitmotif—he just as frequently raises the specter of legendary gay leader Harvey Milk in his speeches, and has taken to mentioning his boyfriend, former *Just Out* intern turned *Oregonian* reporter Peter Zuckerman, at public events.

So perhaps his decision to throw an over-the-top mayoral gala Jan. 31 at The Nines Hotel later this month, and have it benefit Q Center, a nonprofit queer organization he helped found, should come as no big surprise. Portland's new mayor has a vested interest, after all, in keeping Portland queer.

He also has an interest in inspiring the next generation of queer leaders in Portland and beyond, ac-

cording to event co-chairman and Q Center board member Brian Charles Johnson, who describes himself as a 20-year friend and colleague of Adams', and an admirer of the mayor's “vision and ideas. And clearly,” he adds, “it's good to have gay leadership to inspire others, especially younger people.”

So what's exactly on tap at the much-hyped event? April Severson, a consultant who's leading the event planning and execution, says Portland is in for one glitzy night of dancing, music, food and outrageous fun, even if it is ostensibly a politician's party.

“What really sets this event apart is less the sheer size than it's the opportunity for glamour and fun and play,” says Severson, who has two decades of event planning experience. “A lot of times political events are serious and concerned with being correct.”

Not so with this gala, Severson says. She was reluctant to release any real details of what's going down—although Q Center executive director Kendall Clawson did let on that actress Heather Matarazzo of *The L Word* and *Welcome to the Dollhouse* fame is among the guest stars—Severson dropped a few tantalizing crumbs along the trail, including hinting at some sort of “visually exciting presentation” that she thinks “is gonna get people really worked up,” whatever that means.

As to how queer Portland will be on display at the gala, Johnson promised that the entertainment, visual production and, he hopes, crowd will be an outrageously beautiful cross section of the city, queer and otherwise. To that end, he says they tried to price tickets as affordably as possible: \$75 for a general admission ticket, which gets you dancing, food and drinks, and \$150 for a special VIP pass, which guarantees a private audience with his eminence Adams himself. For recession-strapped Portlanders, that might seem a tad steep, but Johnson claims he's “not worried at all” about packing the house. He's quick to remind that the gala is, of course, a fund-raising event for Q Center, which is hoping to walk away with at least \$50,000 toward its capital-building campaign at a time when nonprofit donors are stretched to their thinnest.

As to that most-important queer question for the gala: How best to dress it up for this most glittery of mayor's galas? “Come dressed in festive wear, whatever that means to you,” Johnson urges, noting the affair is black-tie optional. “A tiara or a flannel shirt, but make sure the collar is up on the shirt.” As for himself, Johnson says he'll be showcasing “something fabulous...something that'll make me smile and feel good.”

And in case all those straight readers are feeling a



tad disenfranchised from this très gay event, take heart: Adams doesn't hate on the heteros. “He doesn't want to exclude the straight community, either,” Johnson says, somewhat apologetically, “because he truly wants to be the mayor of all of Portland.” 10

MAYOR'S WINTER GALA takes place Jan. 31 at The Nines Hotel, 525 S.W. Morrison St. VIP admission at 7:30 p.m. is \$150; general admission at 8:30 is \$75. Tickets available online at www.ticketsoregon.com.

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