

Long Live The Q!

Q Center channels Marie Antoinette for annual gala

It's time to pull out the big skirts and powder up the wigs, as Q Center prepares for its annual Winter Gala, the Marie Antoinette-inspired "Vive la Q!" January 29 at The Nines Hotel.

"As we all know it is the formal LGBT party of the season," says Q Center Executive Director Kendall Clawson. "I think it's going to be bigger and better than years past. It's all about glamour. I think our theme is perfect for what we're trying to inspire."

Guests are encouraged to dress formally or in theme for the party. Setting the scene is band Shanghai Willie, a project of Pink Martini trumpeter Gavin Bondy, playing a mix of jazz from the 1920s and '30s and French classics such as Edith Piaf, according to event planner Samantha Swaim.

The evening will begin with a short program, hosted by Livewire Radio's Courtney Hameister, featuring a screening of the Craig Umanoff film *What Starts with Q?* The film explores the history of Q Center as well as highlights from Portland's LGBTQ community.

Q Center will also use the gala as an opportunity to award Darcelle XV with the 2010 Robert Speltz Community Service Award, in

recognition of her involvement in community projects that have positively impacted the local LGBTQ population.

The award was established in 2009 in honor of Robert Speltz, director of public affairs for The Standard and former chair of Q Center's Board of Directors, and his leadership in the LGBTQ community.

Following the program, guests can dance, drink and bid on a host of silent auction items including trip packages. Once the party winds down around midnight, it's likely to continue upstairs, Clawson says, where many guests will take advantage of discounted rates on rooms at the hotel.

"We're really encouraging people to come in groups," Clawson says. "Bring your sweetie if you have one. If not, it's a great place to meet people."

For those who can gather a group, Clawson suggests becoming a ticket captain. People who volunteer to sell tickets to the gala get in for free after selling five tickets and are eligible to win prizes if they are among the top sellers.

Tickets to the event are \$75 for general admission and \$175 for VIP. Those with VIP

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tickets get access to the Barefoot Wines-sponsored VIP lounge, reserved seating, free cocktails and champagne, gift bags and more, Swaim says.

Unlike previous years, all guests will arrive at 7 p.m. to enjoy an absinthe lounge, tasting booths, the silent auction and a raffle.

The gala is also Q Center's primary fundraiser. Clawson says she hopes that, between ticket sales and a "stellar" silent auction, the event will bring in \$75,000 to \$100,000.

"It's the cheapest ticket for an event of this scope that you'll buy," Clawson adds. And the money will help support Q Center's daily operations. "We really prioritize putting the lion's share of [donors'] dollars back into operations."

Specifically, Clawson hopes to have funds

to support the kinds of initiatives that Q Center has championed this past year around issues such as gay bashing, bullying and youth suicide.

"We want to do more of the work of being a conduit in the community," Clawson says. "Q Center has the ability to reach out to a broad cross section of the community."

Fortunately, Clawson doesn't seem to mind that doing such work sometimes requires her to get a little gussied up.

"I have a really great gown, lots of tulle, très élégant," Clawson says. "I got a little gaga over it." ☪

VIVE LA Q: Sat., Jan. 29, 7 p.m.; The Nines, 525 SW Morrison St.; \$75 general admission, \$175 VIP; 503-234-7837 or pdxqcenter.org.

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Reception to Follow