

gay&grey

G Units

What's gay and grey and little bit pink? No, no—not Bugs Bunny (though he did have a thing for drag).

It's this year's Gay & Grey PDX Expo. The third annual event will have all the usual consultations and services for LGBTQ seniors, and this year, organizers are throwing a dance called "Think Pink" the night before. They bill it as "the prom you never had."

The expo is the largest event and fundraiser for Gay & Grey, a program of the nonprofit Friendly House. The expo will feature vendors and workshops all targeted toward LGBTQ seniors. It's a sort of one-stop shop where seniors can get help dealing with housing, health and social issues.

Gay & Grey staff figures about 10,000 LGBTQ seniors are in the Portland metro area, and those seniors are more likely to live alone than heterosexual seniors. They also generally lack adequate family support networks and are five times less likely to access senior services.

The event drew 350 people last year, but in 2011, event organizers are changing things up. They want the expo to appeal to a wider, younger audience. And by "younger," they mean about a decade short of the golden years—think fifties.

"The 50-plus crowd will be 60 before they know it," says Mya Chamberlin, director of services for seniors and homeless families at Friendly House and head of the Gay & Grey program. "We want them involved in the program for a variety of reasons, but also to be sure we are creating a program that will be mean-

Third annual expo has something for the old and young at heart BY AARON SPENCER

ingful for them when the time comes."

But organizers are also trying to connect with all age groups—individuals in their twenties through their forties—to raise awareness about the issue of aging LGBTQ people.

"It is important for us to help the younger generation of LGBT people understand the roots and history of the gay movement," Chamberlin says.

So for starters, organizers are trying to get the word out. They got a big boost from Governor John Kitzhaber. He declared the day of the expo, May 21, to be Gay & Grey Day. Secretary of State Kate Brown will read the official proclamation at the event. Former Governor Barbara Roberts will also attend.

The "prom" is another change. After the previous two events, attendees, vendors and volunteers would get together for drinks at Q Center and discuss how the expo went.

"We felt strongly that the social piece of the expo was something we wanted to build on," Chamberlin says.

The prom is a formal attempt to harness that impromptu socialization. After all, one of the goals of the Gay & Grey program is to connect LGBTQ seniors with each other.



[one], he says.

This year, organizers plan to hold a mandatory diversity training for all of the vendors when the expo begins. And Meisner plans to return. He and his partner, Bob Rugar, are even helping to organize the event.

The expo will include panels on finances, end of life, health and other issues.

And as usual, the popular health and wellness screening room will be available. It's a place where seniors can get checkups on everything from blood pressure to depression—whatever is necessary to keep them up-to-date until the next "What's up, Doc?"

The prom is themed "Think Pink and Shake Off the Grey" and is mostly targeted to seniors, though all ages are welcome. The music will be mostly country and anything from the '40s and '50s. Prom attire and tacky tuxedos are encouraged. Drinks—nonalcoholic, of course—will be served, as will snacks.

As for the main expo, organizers are trying to address concerns some attendees had with the 2010 event, particularly that some of the vendors did not know the audience.

"Last year it seemed to be a lot of Realtors trying to tell you 'Come and live in my place,' but they really didn't know what the needs of a gay couple were," says Bruce Meisner, who attended the event. "There's a big difference between being a gay couple and being a straight

Gay & Grey PDX Expo, Sat., May 21, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Friendly House, 1737 NW 26th Ave.; free; 503-228-4391. "Think Pink" senior prom, Fri., May 20, 6-9 p.m.; Q Center, 4115 N. Mississippi Ave.; \$5-\$25 suggested donation; gayandgreydpx.org.

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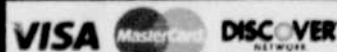
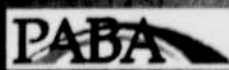
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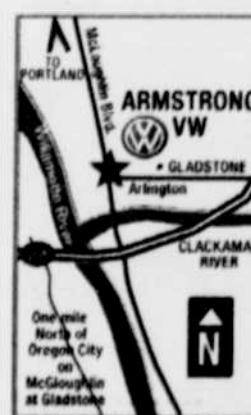


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