

Central Focus

Seventh Annual Bend Pride Festival suits up
for summer support BY RYAN J. PRADO

What began as a barbecue among friends seven years ago has blossomed into an ever-evolving, visible source of pride in Central Oregon. And just as Bend Pride has left the confines of the backyard, the organizers behind the festivities continue to break down barriers in an not-yet-completely tolerant community. Constituting a week's worth of seminars, friendly fundraisers, circus sideshows, queer proms, live music and more, the Human Dignity Coalition's Seventh Annual Bend Pride Festival is ready to make its mark yet again.

"Pride continues to garner support from the Central Oregon community," explains Heather Laurie, HDC's program coordinator. "Each year we see a steady increase in our number of vendors and participants. We are still a small, quaint celebration, but it's a good day for all involved."

Bend is still playing catch up when it comes to fostering the LGBTQ community. Laurie says that HDC constituents have explained how important the group's outreach, education and community events are to Central Oregon's queer community—the only times, they say, when it's okay to be gay in Bend.

"We still do not have any gay bars, coffee shops or drop-in centers," says Laurie. "At HDC we continue to strive to create a community of acceptance for LGBTQ members. We have a long ways to go, but holding public Pride celebrations does help make a difference."

Assisting HDC in its Pride efforts is the Stars and Rainbows committee—an offshoot designed to organize several activities for the

Festivalgoers at
Bend Pride 2010



LGBTQ community in Central Oregon. The organization, launched in January, already boasts close to 200 members, providing gatherings for movies, skiing, cocktails and more on a monthly basis. The group holds an unofficial kick-off meet-and-greet on Sunday, June 5 (11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.) and a closing picnic and hiking event Sunday, June 12 (10 a.m.-2 p.m.), along with a Bloody Mary Farewell Party and Brunch the same day at Common Table (150 NW Oregon Ave., 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m.).

Before the official Bend Pride celebration on Saturday, June 11—held at McKay Park (166 SW Shevlin-Hixon Drive, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.)—HDC broadens its outreach with an LGBTQ Cultural Sensitivity Training at the HDC offices

(354 NE Greenwood Ave., Ste. 110) Monday, June 6 from 6 to 8 p.m. The training, Laurie explains, will be specific to LGBTQ terminology, culture and information.

"We frequently get requests from other non-profit organizations, businesses, schools, therapists and more for information and help with their LGBTQ clients," Laurie says. "These places and people seek to be able to work with our constituents in the most culturally sensitive and respectful ways possible. We will be providing this training free of charge to anyone in the community who is interested in attending."

On Tuesday, June 7, Brew Werks (384 SW Upper Terrace Drive, 6-8 p.m.) hosts a happy hour fundraiser for community members and

friends. One dollar from every menu item purchased goes to HDC.

The circus rolls into town Friday, June 10 (7-10 p.m.) with the third annual Queer Prom, dubbed "Cirque du So Gay." A spectacle of snake-charmers, stilt-walkers, dancers, performers, deejays and more, the gala provides a crucial welcoming environment for LGBTQ youth in Central Oregon. The event is being planned by four youth interns at HDC, folks who know the importance of a night when young people can be themselves without ridicule or judgment.

"Queer Prom has been growing in popularity since its inception," says Laurie, who notes the increase in Gay-Straight Alliances in local high schools. HDC also hosts Queer Youth Space (QYS, pronounced "kiss"), a twice monthly drop-in night for youth ages 14-20. "Cirque du So Gay is a chance for young people to come out, dress how they want, dance with whom they want, and be embraced for the dynamic and wonderful young people that they are," Laurie adds.

The main celebration on June 11 features area deejays and musicians, though as of press time HDC had not confirmed a final lineup. The event welcomes participants from around the state and acts as a regional LGBTQ resource hub for the community at large. And following the festival, an after-party at Club Seven (1033 NW Bond St., 9-11 p.m.) keeps the Pride going for those 21 and over. ☐

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