

Mariposa Moment

Portland Latino Gay Pride spreads its wings with waterfront festival

BY ERIN ROOK

After five years as the official kickoff for Pride in Portland with its early June festivities, Portland Latino Gay Pride is shaking things up in 2011 with a midsummer date (July 14-17) featuring a festival on the Eastbank Esplanade, a full day of events for the women and the near guarantee of warm summer weather.

"It was a significant discussion because it's an investment," says David Martinez, co-founder and chair of PLGP, "but folks felt ready."

All signs pointed to an expansion of the event. PLGP, now in its sixth year, had outgrown its home at the Jupiter Hotel, more people were asking about the event during Portland Pride and the organization had been named Grand Marshal for the Portland Pride Parade.

"Because of that honor we can maximize our exposure, we can get people excited," Martinez, 43, says. "So we're excited—a little scared, but excited."

This year at Portland Pride, Martinez was able to tell people, "Mark your calendars. Pride continues."

Martinez and the planning committee are building on the momentum from last year's celebration, which he said maxed out the Jupiter's capacity at 650 people and probably saw 1,000 visitors over the course of the festivities. This year, PLGP is planning for up to 1,000 people at one time and expects a total of 1,500 to 2,000 attendees.

If even half that many people pay the \$5 suggested donation, PLGP will raise \$5,000 for its scholarship fund—this year, Seattle's Pride Foundation has offered to match festival donations up to \$2,500.

"They're doing that because they believe in us," Martinez says.

The event's growth is evidence of the planning committee's commitment to creating an



event that reflects the diversity of the community.

"This celebration is for everyone, we really wanted to make that clear," Martinez says. But in the early years of PLGP, "a couple of segments of the population weren't as involved. Women were one."

That's all changing in 2011. Although the participation of women has increased over the past few years, this is the first time PLGP will dedicate an entire day to the chicas.

"Portland Latino Gay Pride has been celebrating the Latino LGBTQ community since 2006. Latina (Chicas)-specific events were added to the tradition in 2008 with Chicas Who Brunch—an event designed to give Latinas a space to meet other Latinas in the Portland metro community," says Vanessa La Torre, chair of Chicas CelebrAcción (see profile, p. 23). "This year, we are expanding on this tradition by offering Chicas CelebrAcción—a full day of activities that offers a little of everything for everyone."

In the spirit of inclusiveness, Chicas CelebrAcción both honors LGBTQ Latinas and embraces all those who love them.

"Without our allies—our friends, families, colleagues and acquaintances—we wouldn't

"We've been growing each year and I think this year, with what we're doing, we're expecting to continue to draw [people] and become a destination for folks throughout the nation."

—DAVID MARTINEZ,
CO-FOUNDER & CHAIR, PLGP

be who we are, or where we are today," La Torre, 30, says. "Chicas CelebrAcción is a day to celebrate the Latina voice, especially the Latina LGBTQ voice. We hope that anyone and everyone can come celebrate us... regardless of how you identify—or don't."

Martinez says PLGP is also trying to make the event more accessible to Spanish-speaking Latinos. To that end, the festival will be presented in both Spanish and English. The longstanding involvement of bilingual newspaper *El Hispanic News* (publisher Melanie Davis co-founded PLGP with Martinez) helps reach Spanish speakers as well.

"I think it's something we continue to recognize and want, to be inclusive of the entire community," Martinez says. "In every community there's diversity. We're trying to find

ways to increase the participation of every segment of the Latino community."

It was the recognition of that diversity in the midst of Portland Pride 2005 that inspired Martinez and Davis to start PLGP.

"The first celebration was sort of a brainstorm vision that Melanie Davis and myself had at the Pride festival and parade," Martinez explains. "We had heard about other Latino gay prides and, for both of us, it just seemed like an exciting possibility."

At the time there was a Latino gay pride celebration in San Jose, Calif. While that event has since ceased, Chicago started an event the same year as Portland, and Washington, D.C. joined in the following year.

"What's been great for us is when we've been able to connect with other Latino gay prides," Martinez relates, just a few days before flying out to a Latino leadership conference in Cincinnati that would give him the opportunity to do just that.

The fact that more events are popping up around the country reflects the need for culturally specific Pride celebrations.

"From that first one we were just stunned by all the support and the interest and the personal stories we heard from people who did not realize that there were gay Latinos," Martinez says. "And so [PLGP] sort of just grew from there."

Martinez is quick to point out, however, that there were Latino events and organizations in town before PLGP was established. Still, Portland Latino Gay Pride brings something different.

"What's interesting is a lot of bars will have Latino nights—Boxxes and Embers and Silverado—so there's definitely a population. And then the pageants, there's Poder Latino and Latin Look (see profiles, p. 21 and p. 19, respectively)—they've been around and been part of the community," Martinez says. "I

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