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Kimberly Caldwell IS the New Bling Girl!

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hearts and minds of Vancouver's queer community is the recent shuttering of longtime gay bar, LGBTQ-focused fundraising headquarters and original planning center for SITP, The Northbank. Gibson says the closure of the neighborhood hub will impact the community in more ways than the void left by a gay-friendly establishment at which people could gather.

"For many years the Northbank has been a safe place where people could get out and mingle," explains Gibson, who was the bar's assistant manager. Owners Darrell Spoon and Brent Bartling and management staff are working with organizations such as Cascade AIDS Project and Martha's Pantry, as well as other bar owners, to devise a plan to continue fundraising and have a drop-off location where the community can make charitable donations.

"This year's Saturday in the Park is going to be a kickoff to a new beginning," Gibson continues. He says the board of directors is working on obtaining 501(c)(3) status for the organization and a community outreach program to connect with youth and multiple in-town resources.

"We are also developing a scholarship program and hope to be giving away scholarships to youths or any individual that is interested in higher education," he says. "We are hoping that this scholarship program will be in place by the beginning of our next fiscal year and to be giving away the funds at our pride event in 2012."

Lyle's Myles—a 5K annual charity walk/run—gets things started in downtown Vancouver July 9. The run, which benefits Cascade AIDS Project, Martha's Pantry and Global Partners for Development—begins at 8:30 a.m. and is open to all.

Just slightly farther north of the Washington border, Mid-Columbia Pride celebrates its fifth year with a full schedule of events July 10–17. With Club Out and About (327 W. Lewis St., Pasco, Wash.) acting as headquarters for the beginning of the week, festivities

begin Sunday, July 10 with the LGBTQ Film Festival, featuring award-winning documentary *Put this on the (Map)* at 4 p.m.

Mid-Columbia Pride chair Jason Kildall has fostered the event from what was originally a vehicle for the Vista Youth Center to show the youth population what a Pride celebration was. The annual event has since evolved from a few hundred people gathered together in a parking lot, to approximately 3,500 people attending a three-day weekend of events, to a weeklong schedule of activities. Mid-Columbia Pride has also moved its festival and parade itinerary out of Pasco and into

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—JASON KILDALL,  
MID-COLUMBIA PRIDE CHAIR

Kennewick, Wash.

Kildall notes the LGBTQ community's fortitude during Pride season as a major factor for Mid-Columbia's continued growth.

"Although we are in a conservative area, the GLBT community is becoming stronger and the allied community is showing its support," he explains.

What began as a community with a gay bar now includes Club Out and About, Vista Youth Center, Mid-Columbia Pride, MCC River of Life Church, My Friends Place homeless youth shelter, Benton/Franklin PFLAG, Gay-Straight Alliances and much more.

"We are a growing community, taking the steps necessary to blur the lines of discrimination and moving forward to make a difference," Kildall says.

On Saturday, July 16, that difference will once again be on display during the Miss Gay Columbia Basin Pageant, held at Out and About at 9 p.m. The week culminates in the Mid-Columbia Pride March and Festival Sunday, July 17 in downtown Kennewick, Wash. beginning at 2 p.m., followed by the festival at Keewaydin Park from 3 to 6 p.m.

For more information on Saturday in the Park, visit [sitppride.info.home](http://sitppride.info.home) or [lylesmyles.com](http://lylesmyles.com). For the complete Mid-Columbia Pride itinerary, search "Mid-Columbia Pride" on Facebook.

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