

Making Connections

Gay Fair and LGBTQ Expo bring community resources together

BY ERIN ROOK

The waterfront Pride Festival may be but a fond summer memory, but two upcoming events give the LGBTQ community another chance to connect with local resources and businesses while taking in performances by local artists—the first annual Portland LGBTQ Expo and the third annual Gay Fair on the Square.

“The Pride Festival is the only other real place [LGBT folks] can see businesses that are catered to or friendly to them all in one place,” says Noah Culver, Portland LGBTQ Expo organizer and member of the Portland Area Business Association.

Though CW Productions president Culver and his business partner are straight, both have friends and family in the LGBTQ community and simply saw a need that their tradeshow company could fill.

“We had been a PABA member and in the community as a networking group. We had promoted other events we had at Pride and around town,” Culver explains. “So we thought, ‘Why is there not a more business-to-consumer show out there?’”

Culver says he initially got some push back about his motives and qualifications for putting on an LGBTQ event, but that it eventually worked out.

“I produce a car show but I don’t own a hot rod. I know people who do,” Culver explains, adding that he’s been around the LGBTQ community in some capacity for most of his life.

In addition to connecting LGBTQ consumers with friendly businesses and nonprofit organizations, the September 10-11 event will also bring LGBTQ performances and speakers to the Portland Expo Center.

“Tradeshows can become kind of boring,” Culver admits. That’s why he’s invited the Alley Cats Band, the Shannon Tower Band, the



Curious Comedy Showcase and Jack’s Bad Habit to provide musical interludes.

The performances will be interspersed with speakers on transgender issues, domestic violence and other important topics. The LGBTQ Expo will also donate a portion of ticket sales to Cascade AIDS Project.

“We really wanted to put that as a focal point,” Culver says. “[CAP is] something near and dear to our community.”

For those who want all the community love without the sales pitch, the Portland Gay Men’s Chorus is putting on its Gay Fair on the Square the following Sunday, September 18.

“It’s really an outgrowth of the chorus’ overall mission to uplift the gay community and affirm the worth of all people,” says fair founder and PGMC board president Seth Miller. “We wanted to bring our outreach concerts that we typically do in rural communities to Portland and use our performances as a spotlight for all the programs in the LGBTQ community.”

Helping focus that light on nonprofits, athletic groups and health care providers are event sponsors Pride NW, Nike and Provi-

The sights and sounds of Gay Fair on the Square 2010

dence Health and Services. New to the mix this year is the Domestic Violence Resource Center/Domestic Violence Safe Discussion.

“It’s a really neat thing for people who are considering coming out, just coming out, new to town or looking to make new connections,” Miller says. “It’s in Portland’s Living Room. There are no fences and no admission fees. Everyone is welcome.”

The fair, prominently situated in Pioneer Courthouse Square, will feature performances by the PGMC, the Portland Gay Symphonic Band, the Portland Lesbian Choir and Confluence.

For the first time, the PGMC will perform in collaboration with the Portland Gay Symphonic Band on the piece “Testament of Freedom.” The chorus will also perform pieces from “Brave Souls and Dreamers”—the show they’re taking to New York for the 10-year anniversary of 9/11—and other popular works from its repertoire.

Because the fair is so centrally located, and



occurs just after the Susan G. Komen Walk for the Cure wraps up, it also creates visibility for the LGBTQ community. Depending on the weather, Miller says he expects up to 4,000 people to stop by.

“One of the wonderful things about the fair are the people who weren’t expecting to find it,” Miller says. “We get great joy looking at the pictures afterward and looking at the expressions on people’s faces.”

Portland LGBTQ Expo, Sat., Sept. 10, 11 a.m.-9 p.m.; Sun., Sept. 11, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; Portland Expo Center, 2060 N. Marine Drive; \$7, \$2 off with two cans of food for Sunshine Pantry; 866-571-2916 or portlandlgbtqexpo.com.

Gay Fair on the Square, Sun., Sept. 18, 12:30-5 p.m.; Pioneer Courthouse Square, SW Sixth Ave. and SW Morrison St.; free; 503-226-2588 or pdxgmc.org.

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