

Come Out, Portland

Your local guide to National Coming Out Day events

BY AARON SPENCER

This year's National Coming Out Day, set for October 11, marks perhaps the easiest time yet for individuals to come out as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer.

The event, founded in 1988, encourages sexual minorities and their straight allies to celebrate their pride and focus on advancing LGBTQ rights. The date was originally chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1987.

But today, six states and the District of Columbia have legalized same-sex marriage. Nearly 650,000 couples identified as same-sex partners in the 2010 census, an 80 percent increase from 2000. The It Gets Better Project is 22,000 videos strong in support of bullied queer teens. Chaz Bono is on *Dancing with the Stars*. The world has never been more welcoming toward those who are out.

Still, recent headlines serve as a reminder that timing is critical, and of the reality that intolerance persists to sometimes tragic effect. Last month, Jamey Rodemeyer, a 14-year-old from Buffalo, N.Y., committed suicide after being bullied for being out.

"In general, I do think the more people who are out the more others will come to know LGBT people and the more we can advance the movement," says Dawn Holt, president of PFLAG Portland, "but there are definitely times when it's in one's best interest not to come out."

For those who are ready, Portland has a bevy of events where you can be out and proud.

Night of 100 Dinners

The Saturday before National Coming Out Day, Portland's Q Center is holding a fundraiser in homes across Oregon. Strictly speaking, during the "Night of 100

Dinners," hosts will provide the meals and guests are encouraged to donate to the queer community hub. But more loosely, hosts can cook the meal, have it catered or hold a potluck. The dinner party can be for any number of guests, but each host has a goal of raising \$200.

Sat., Oct. 8; visit pdxqcenter.com for information on attending or hosting a dinner; \$20 minimum donation per person encouraged.

Count On Me/National Coming Out Day 2011 Community Event

The nonprofit that runs Portland Pride, Pride Northwest, is holding an event at Skidmore Fountain on National Coming Out Day to launch the "Count On Me" campaign. The effort is meant to raise awareness of resources available to the LGBTQ community to combat and deal with violence and harassment. Partners in the campaign include the Sexual Minorities Roundtable, the Mayor's Office of Safety & Peacekeeping, Equity Foundation, Basic Rights Oregon, Cascade AIDS Project, the Sexual and Gender Minority Youth Resource Center and the PFLAG Portland Black Chapter.

Tues., Oct. 11, 6 p.m.; Skidmore Fountain at SW Ankeny St. and First Ave.; pridenw.com.

National Coming Out Day Prayer Breakfast

Start your National Coming Out Day with a prayer breakfast hosted by the Community of Welcoming Congregations, the Oregon nonprofit collective of LGBTQ-welcoming spiritual organizations. The event is an opportunity for LGBTQ individuals to come out as people of faith, says the Rev. Tara Wilkins,

CWC president. Local religious leaders will be on hand to speak.

Tues., Oct. 11, 8:30-10 a.m.; Augustana Lutheran Church, 2710 NE 14th Ave.; free, but donations encouraged; welcomingcongregations.org.

Coming Out Day Intergenerational Event

LGBTQ senior citizens will share coming out stories with LGBTQ homeless youth the evening of National Coming Out Day. Outside In, the nonprofit for homeless youth, and Gay & Grey, a program for LGBTQ seniors by the nonprofit Friendly House, are partnering for the event. Outside In's program Queerzone targets the many youth who have been kicked out of their homes for coming out to their families.

Tues., Oct. 11, 6-8 p.m.; Outside In, 1132 SW 13th Ave.; free; outsidein.org.

Portland State University's National Coming Out Week

Portland State University's Queer Resource Center has a week full of events to commemorate National Coming Out Day, from a coffee klatch to karaoke. All of the events will be held in Smith Memorial Student Union and are open to the public.

Mon., Oct. 10, noon-7 p.m.: The QRC will hold an open house in its offices. Learn about programs offered, have some snacks and "Guess the Straight" during a game show-styled presentation that debunks stereotypes.

Tues., Oct. 11, noon-9 p.m.: A trans coffee hour (noon-1 p.m.) in the QRC offices provides an opportunity to meet and mingle with genderqueer people. Then head to the Queeries Coming Out Panel in rooms 228-29 to



hear students tell their stories (2-3 p.m.). Afterward, from 3 to 5 p.m., you'll have a chance to share your own coming out story, whether it's on camera, written or through art. You'll also be provided with supplies to make a special coming out T-shirt. The space will be reserved for transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals from 4:30 to 5 p.m. And from 7 to 9 p.m., stay to watch *Paris is Burning*, the 1990 documentary about drag nights among New York's underclass.

Wed., Oct. 12, 3-7 p.m.: Attend a panel on health care for transgender people from 3 to 5 p.m. in room 236. Afterward, stay for "Toys in the Closet," an informative program on condoms, lube and more.

Fri., Oct. 14, 7-10 p.m.: End the week with a dance party and karaoke outside the student union at the South Park Blocks. ☐

Mon., Oct. 10-Fri., Oct. 14; 1825 SW Broadway; free; qrc.pdx.edu.

Visit blogout.justout.com for late-breaking Coming Out Day events and news.



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