



PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

# It's Good to be Queen

*Life in the slime-light with Eugene's new SLUG Queen*

She is regal by nature — a multi-tasking hat-switching juggler who finds comfort in the slime-light — as well as a diplomat and scene-starter with a “rain” that has no end. Holly GoSlugly is Eugene’s newly crowned 2011 SLUG Queen, patron saint for the Society for the Legitimization of the Ubiquitous Gastropod, and she is very serious about it.

Much can be said about this homegrown Eugenean who, when she isn’t fully decked out in queenly attire and gracing social events in the name of non-profits, is head of communications at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art. Having fashioned her name in homage to Audrey Hepburn’s character Holly Golightly from the 1961 Blake Edwards film *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, GoSlugly is transparent in the assumption of her queenly role.

“I’ve become very comfortable with my multiple personalities,” she says with a laugh while posing for what must be the millionth photo snapped of her over the past week — the new queen waves to passing students and joggers outside the JSMA while still maintaining her royal poise for *EW* cameramen.

GoSlugly, who goes by Debbie Williamson-Smith in her day-to-day professional life, is far more outspoken and in-your-face with crown and scepter in hand. The correct word is: diva-ish. She is a perfect mix of sublime and campy, two absolutely necessary traits for a Slug Queen. The acquisition of her coveted position was a well-earned victory.

“I took bribery to a new level,” GoSlugly says of how she won the crown this year. “Last year I lost by half a vote. This year I really went after it.”

Indeed she did. GoSlugly has raised SLUG Queen status to never-before-seen heights. Not only was she joined onstage by her five dancing “Sluggettes,” — men who donned beautiful dresses and pranced on stage to a parody of Lady Gaga’s “Born This Way,” — but GoSlugly convinced Voodoo Doughnut to create a new SLUG Queen doughnut that will be added to the regular menu. She worked with the Literary Duck to create a display of the Queen’s favorite books to be launched just before the Eugene Celebration, and convinced the Eugene Store Front Art Project to do a pop-up gallery of slug-inspired art, which should be on the way in October.

GoSlugly has also created a brand out of the SLUG Queen monarchy, and given that Slug Queens remain queen even after their year of official public service, it may be a brand that continues to exist as long as SLUG Queen contests continue.

For those new to Eugene or unaware of the SLUG Queen hoopla (sometimes referred to as an alternative festival and/or pageant), the 30-year-old event is a coronation of Eugene’s unofficial ambassador that takes place every year. First conceived by former Councilor and Country Fair co-founder Cynthia Wooten, the SLUG Queen is chosen by way of a no-rules talent show. The new queen is asked to throw a fundraiser for a charity of her choice, and throughout the year she must make appearances at local events such as the Eugene Celebration, First Friday Art Walk and the Jell-O Art Show at the Maude Kerns gallery.

“Being the SLUG Queen embraces everything that Eugene is,” GoSlugly says. “This is a come-as-you-are town, where we all contribute and voice our opinions, and slug queens do all that, but with a crown on our heads.”

Walking through the JSMA with GoSlugly leading the way, there is no questioning the queen’s authority. She adjusts her crown and arranges for a roped-off gallery to be opened — one of her coworkers offers to get the door so GoSlugly can maneuver her full costume and regalia through the space. She accepts the gesture with a nod and a smile — it’s good to be queen. — *Dante Zuñiga-West*

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