

STAND UP AT THE EUGENE/SPRINGFIELD PRIDE FESTIVAL

As a student at a local Christian college, I am probably the most conservative person at *Eugene Weekly*. I want to attend Pride to show my neighbors that they and their concerns are important to me. I suggest other conservatives to do the same.

The 26th annual Eugene/Springfield Pride Festival welcomes hundreds of attendees, especially families, to its Aug. 12 celebration. "This is the one Pride event that is kid friendly, positive and not alcohol focused. Have a good time and make sure we enjoy each other's company," says volunteer coordinator Vince Mays. "We are a community of minorities that come together on an annual basis to express who we are and ensure a safe space to celebrate our culture. We welcome everyone."

Should straight people attend and show their support? Absolutely. "We can't do it without them," Mays says.

But the festival is not only about celebrating victories. "Different subcultures in our community are being attacked," Mays tells *EW*. He soberly points out rising transgender murder rates. "While we are enjoying the fruits of our labors in the past, like marriage laws, there are folks who are not protected right now in our community."

This in itself is a reason for conservatives to come out to the park: We can agree that violence towards human beings is wrong.

Liberal or conservative, you should go to Pride

BY EMILY DUNNAN

On the lighter side, the festival features live performances from groups such as the Work Dance Company (Eugene's gay dance group), Glamazons (a drag cabaret) and Unveiled: Eugene's Queer Burlesque.

Drag queen comedian Pandora Boxx (of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, Season 2) will entertain with a performance at 4:45 pm. There will be an opportunity to meet her and snap a selfie after the show.

A secondary stage will host group art projects, exhibits from local LGBTQ artists and group discussions on gender identity and sexuality.

Vendors will offer food, drinks and rainbows. The Wayward Lamb has sponsored the beer garden. Organizers have planned a fantastic raffle for prizes ranging from a GoPro to hotel stays to luggage.

Nonprofits supported by Eugene Pride will also have a presence, including the HIV Alliance, which offers free testing all day.

I'm not asking my fellow conservatives to be comfortable at Pride. I'm asking them to love their neighbors. Love is hard, and if anyone knows that, it's the LGBTQ community that has endlessly fought for it. ■

The Eugene/Springfield Pride Festival takes place noon to 6 pm Saturday, Aug. 12, at Alton Baker Park. FREE, \$5 suggested donation.



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