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Cocktails and Gayla

The weekend's agenda is full of official volunteer-run Pride events, as well as community events happening concurrently and the week leading up to the festival. The only ticketed events — which are also fundraisers for the Q Center — are Friday night's Cocktails with the Queens and the third annual Astoria Pride Gayla.

The preshow soiree starts at 6 p.m. in the McTavish Room at the Liberty Theatre. The Gayla, also at the Liberty Theatre, is a taste of the region's eclectic and diverse talent that celebrates expression, inclusion, queer family and love. Performers from Portland, Seattle and other cities who have a connection to the region also make guest appearances.

The Gayla includes drag performances, singing, dancing, a performance by the Q Center's Q Choir and more. Davis organizes and directs the Gayla, which is satisfying for "the artist side" of him, he said. He will be performing, as will Bowman, who is singing a brassy Broadway number called "Big Time" in the style of Linda Eder.

Bowman also sang at last year's Gayla; to be asked to audition a second year, he said, was "an extreme honor." Though the event is a talent showcase, those involved feel it means more than that.

"Backstage and onstage, you felt this energy, that everyone was there for the same reason," Bowman said about last year's Gayla. "It was a performance, but it wasn't a performance, if that makes sense."

'A colorful community'

Bree Libertad, a board member for the Q Center and a singer, agreed. "It's a time to highlight the different talents people in the LGBTIQ+ community possess, and that we are willing and wanting to put ourselves out there," and also for allies to show up and demonstrate support, she said.

Last year's involvement, when Libertad performed with the Dragalution troupe, was particularly significant to her. When she initially auditioned, she had not come out publicly, but by the event, she had.

"For me, it was a very important experience," she said. "It was more than just performing at Pride. It was expressing, 'This is who I am, a part of this colorful community.' It was a really amazing experience."

She is excited to be sharing in this year's Pride events with her partner and two children.

"Having those moments to shine as a family is definitely the highlight for me," she said.

In addition, her preschool, Salmonberry Play School, is a sponsor of the festival this year, and students and families will be walking in the parade, which takes place Saturday.



COURTESY ASTORIA PRIDE

Members of the United Finnish Lesbians of Astoria participate in the 2017 Astoria Pride Riverwalk Parade.

OFFICIAL PRIDE EVENTS

COCKTAILS WITH THE QUEENS, TICKETS \$20

6 to 7:30 p.m., Friday, June 8, in the McTavish Room at the Liberty Theatre, 1203 Commercial St.

THIRD ANNUAL ASTORIA PRIDE GAYLA, TICKETS \$30, OR \$15 FOR PARTIAL VIEW

7:30 p.m. doors open, show begins at 8 p.m., Friday, June 8, at the Liberty Theatre, 1203 Commercial St.

RIVERWALK PRIDE PARADE, FREE ADMISSION

Noon, Saturday, June 9, leaving from Fourth Street and skipping down the Riverwalk to the Barbey Maritime Museum Block Party

PRIDE BLOCK PARTY, FREE ADMISSION

1 to 8 p.m., Saturday, June 9, along the Riverwalk at the Barbey Maritime Center, 1792 Marine Drive

PRIDE DANCE PARTY, FREE ADMISSION

9 p.m. to midnight, Saturday, June 9, at the Astoria Arts & Movement Center, 342 10th St., third floor

PRIDE PICNIC IN THE PARK, FREE ADMISSION

11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sunday, June 10, in Tapiola Park, 900 W. Marine Drive

COMMUNITY PRIDE EVENTS

QUEER-AOKE AT THE LABOR TEMPLE, FREE ADMISSION

7:30 p.m. Thursday, June 7, at the Labor Temple, 934 Duane St.

UNOFFICIAL PRIDE AFTER PARTY AT THE LABOR TEMPLE, FREE ADMISSION

Directly after the Gayla, Friday, June 8, at the Labor Temple, 934 Duane St.

QUEER ARTIST SHOWING @ AVA POP-UP SPACE

5 to 8 p.m., Saturday, June 9, at Pier 11 Studios, 80 11th St.

"AFFABLE GENTLEMEN PRESENTS "QUIERDOS UNITED"

8 p.m. Saturday, June 9, at the Labor Temple, 934 Duane St.

PACIFIC UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP SERVICE

11 a.m., Sunday, June 10, at the Performing Arts Center, 588 16th St.

'You're not alone'

In Bowman's opinion, "the parade is the icon of any Pride weekend."

"That's what people most recognize," he added. "It's what people love to be in. They

like to go spectate. It brings a sense of community and love and acceptance."

Davis agreed the parade is "magical and so intimate, because we're walking beside our friends and relatives, who are there to watch or

walk with us. I love that."

The parade builds on a tradition started by the 1970 Christopher Street Gay Liberation March, and peacefully demonstrates solidarity, pride and a demand for "freedom from oppression, violence, bullying, discrimination and hate," according to a news release. Anyone who supports equality and human rights is encouraged to join, walking or biking in the parade or spectating.

In addition to celebrating victories achieved by the LGBTIQ+ community and highlighting the remaining obstacles, the parade is also a sort of awareness campaign.

"It's for other people who might be afraid, who don't know that they have a voice and they have some safe place to go," said Bowman, who felt as a young gay man that resources, information and support were not readily available to him, and he would like others to have a different experience. "Having a sense of community and letting people know there is a place is what it's about. You're not alone."

Family-friendly events

The Riverwalk Pride Parade leaves at noon from the foot of Sixth Street and will be led by Grand Marshal Abraham Lincoln (Walter Trumbull) and the North Coast regional ambassadors; the route follows the waterfront to the Barbey Maritime Center at the Columbia River Maritime Museum for the Pride Block Party, which is free and open to the public. The party, which goes to 8 p.m., features performers, local food trucks, vendors and nonprofit booths.

Saturday's festivities wrap up with Pride Dance Party from 9 p.m. to midnight at the Astoria Arts & Movement Center, 342 10th St. Admission is free. The festival will wind down Sunday with a picnic at Tapiola Park from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be food and family-friendly activities and games.

The picnic was added to the lineup this year as another way for families or people in different stages of life to collectively enjoy the festival.

"I would encourage anyone who has any interest in exploring what our community is like to come out," Libertad said. "Any opportunity we have to be with others in a setting that is really focused on promoting love and acceptance, the more people that show up for something like that, the more beneficial it will be for everyone."

Looking beyond the Astoria Pride celebration, the center's board is working toward enhancing opportunities to bring people together routinely throughout the year.

"We are looking at how we can offer support and opportunities to people in our community who want to connect with others and just know they're seen and heard," Libertad said.

For more information, visit lcqcastoria.org/. To purchase tickets for ticketed events, such as Cocktails with Queens and the Gayla, visit the Liberty Theatre website. 