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"Homocoming"

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The Bent Writing Institute kicked off its "Homocoming" fundraiser Saturday with a game of flag football. The game pitted several writers against members of the Emerald City Softball Association (ECSA). The fundraiser continued that evening with the Homocoming Dance held at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Community Center at 8 p.m.

The dance, themed "Oh, What a Feeling," attracted more guests than the afternoon football game at Miller Playfield, but both proved successful fundraisers, said Bent founder Tara Hardy. All proceeds benefited Bent, a non-profit organization since the spring of 2004.

Admission to the noon game was free, but several twists were applied to normal football rules that gathered substantial donations for Bent.

Over the course of the game, fans paid to put the Poet and Jock teams in diapers, blindfold the Jocks, and have players on both teams fasten leathery and lacy undergarments over their clothes.

Fans could purchase points for either team (\$10 for a touchdown, \$5 for a two-point conversion), negate points already on the scoreboard (\$20 for a touchdown; \$10 for a two point conversion) or select a player who would don a clothing article of their choice (\$5).

Bent members formed the red-and-black clad Poet team, while ECSA members made up the Jock team and sported blue scrubs as jerseys. Both Bent and the ECSA strive to provide a community outlet for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning (GLBTIQ) individuals in the Seattle area.

The final score was 64-40 in favor of the poets. Each team only scored one touchdown outside of the audience's intervention, estimated Erin Johnson, the Bent supporter in charge of the scoreboard.

"Money buys points," he said in regard to the score. "Just like in real sports."

At the dance, Kraft and BOD president Amy Mahoney took time to honor six members of Bent who are especially active in community volunteer efforts. Dalya Perez, Debbie Carlson, Krys Bennett, Colin Loveall, Zan Scomodau and Erick Seelbach were named

members of the Homocoming Royal Court. Their volunteer contributions ranged from extensive support within Bent to working for the Washington Women's Voter Project and Verbena, a health-advocacy group for GLBTIQ women.

"We don't feel this is a competitive royal court," Kraft announced when presenting the Homocoming royalty. "These are people we truly believe in."

DJ Hotcakes (by day known as Perez) spun a mix of recent hip-hop tracks and old favorites that kept the room filled and pulsing without pause the whole evening. Glimpses of fishnets blurred with sparkly shades of taffeta as dance enthusiasm reached its peak.

"What I love about it is it's really for all ages and identities," shared Scommodau. "And the queer community includes straight people," she adds.

Bent's previous fundraisers have been mostly literary showcases featuring performances by its members along with out-of-town mentors like Michelle Tea and Justin Chin. The three showcases to date have been wildly successful, said Hardy. At the first, Bent's writers attracted a standing-room only audience which was captivated for three hours.

Bent's showcases take about three months to plan, said Mahoney; planning the Homocoming took equally long. She described her impetus to start this new fundraiser for Bent: "People want to dance all the time," she said. "They only want to hear poetry sometimes." She also sees the Homocoming as a great way to increase community involvement in Bent and the LGBT.

"It's a way to integrate the queer voice into the greater community -- to get a different perspective on the stage and in poetry," agreed Tyler Perry, External Relations spokesperson for Bent and graduate student in the UW School of Social Work.

Hardy, a successful performance poet, founded Bent in 2000 when she began a poetry class for GLBTIQ writers in Seattle. "I just started teaching classes in my living room," she said. Since then, The Bent Writing Institute has expanded and moved to an office on Pike and 12th Street.

Bent's members plan to turn the Homocoming into an annual event.

"It's going to happen every year," Mahoney said. "This is a great turnout."

"The silly factor is high," she added.