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Beach Bash Fetes Center's 30 Years

By Darcy Leigh Richardson
Editor

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For a change in tradition, The Gay and Lesbian Center of Greater Long Beach's 30th Anniversary Party will year, but fun.

According to The Center's chairman of the Board of Directors, Ron Sylvester, black-tie attire won't be required for the organization's annual fundraiser, "30th Birthday Beach Bash," from 5 to 10 p.m. Saturday, July 31, at Alfredo's restaurant and bar at Ocean Boulevard and Granada Avenue.

Advance tickets, only available online, are \$45. Tickets are \$55 at the door. The cost includes all food, drinks and entertainment.

"When we looked at doing a yearly signature fund-raiser event, we realized we didn't want to do a gala," Sylvester said. "We did a reunion earlier in the year for all the volunteers and staff, so we wanted the (fundraiser) to be more of a party. The Beach Bash is fun, less expensive and more inclusive."

Sylvester said the festivities will kick off at 5 p.m. with a sunset happy hour with drinks (non-alcoholic beverages, wine and mai tais) and snacks, followed by a full barbecue dinner. DJ Mark Bisson will be spinning tunes on through the event.

Opportunity drawings will occur during the evening with prizes ranging from \$100 Target gift cards to a round-trip ticket on JetBlue Airways.

"We are pleased to offer a new type of fund-raising event to the community and we hope it will become our signature fund-raising event," Sylvester said.

To continue the celebration after 10 p.m., Club Ripples, 5101 E. Ocean Blvd., will offer a two-for-one entry fee. A portion of the entry fee donated back to The Center, Sylvester said.

In addition to beverage sponsors Columbia Crest Winery and Bud Light, Long Beach-based organizations such as the Interval House and Long Beach Pride have continued a tradition of collaboration and pitched in to help.

Interval House, a crisis shelter and center for victims of domestic violence, was founded in 1979. Mary Wal

clinical director, said for the past 30 years, the organization has provided services for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning community (LGBTQ) as well as heterosexual clients.

"Interval House staff have been personally involved and supportive of The Center's efforts to foster healthy relationships among same-sex couples and families," Walton said in a statement. "Because The Center is the hub of the LGBTQ community in the greater Long Beach area, Interval House has chosen to share our funds to support The Center... We hope that everyone will support their efforts and upcoming Beach Bash because they are truly saving lives."

Long Beach Lesbian & Gay Pride, Inc., was established in October 1983 and produced the first annual Long Beach Lesbian & Gay Pride Festival in June 1984.

Julie Brown, co-president of Long Beach Pride, said the organization has collaborated with The Center since its beginnings, and this year, Pride is hosting the Q Film Festival with The Center.

"Through our grant process, we have also funded many of their special projects, including the Art & Film Festival in 2006 ... and in 2009, when the Health Department told them they would have to shut down the HIV testing room at their proper facilities, we sponsored the room so that they could purchase and install the necessary equipment to be able to do as said.

The Center offers services such as free HIV testing, legal counseling by appointment, support groups for adults and youth, and chat groups.

When it received 501c(3) status on March 25, 1980, Sylvester said the original initiatives of the organization (which were a gay men's information hotline and a men's "rap group" that still meets today).

The Center's original location was a small storefront on 10th Street. In 1985, the organization was able to move to its current location, a former bank building at 2017 E. Fourth St., through the bequests of several individuals who died of HIV and AIDS.

To purchase tickets, visit www.centerlb.org.

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