



SOPride Media Contact:

Deborah Rothschild

Phone: 541.531.3730

Email: rothschilddeb@yahoo.com

SOPride Website: www.sopride.org

Southern Oregon Pride Festival 2011

We Are All Family - a Weekend of Love, Peace, Education

“We Are All Family” is the theme of this year’s Southern Oregon Pride Festival. The two day celebration promoting dignity and equal rights for everyone will be held Friday, September 30 and Saturday, October 1 in Ashland. The city is one of almost 100 U.S. cities where gay and straight people come together to celebrate pride and universal acceptance.

Events will begin at 7:00 p.m. on Friday with the SOPride Kickoff Party at the historic Ashland Armory. KISS FM Radio’s DJ Hope will be spinning the music, and entertainment will include a performance by The Queens of the Night. Tickets for the Kickoff Party may be purchased in advance (beginning September 1) at Paddington Station or the Music Coop in Ashland.

On Saturday at 10 a.m. SOPride Parade participants will begin gathering at the staging areas on Union St. and Siskiyou Blvd. At noon marchers, floats, and bands will wind their way through downtown Ashland and into Lithia Park, where they will be greeted with a Pride Celebration at the bandshell. Entertainment will be provided by Melissa Li & The Barely Theirs. Local political leaders and equal rights activists will address the crowd. (More information about Melissa Li & The Barely Theirs is included below.)

The Grand Marshal for this year’s SOPride Festival is Beth Coye, Commander, United States Navy (retired). Beth was selected in recognition of her many years of advocacy for gays and lesbians in the military and for her leadership in the repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell. (More information about Beth is included below.)

This year, City Council Members for the The City of Ashland voted to have Ashland sponsor SOPride Festival 2011. In recognition of the City Council’s sponsorship, Ashland Major John Stromberg will serve as the Honorary Grand Marshal. Faith based

communities, organizations, businesses, and individuals are also supporting “We Are All Family” - SOPride Festival 2011.

In addition to the Pride Parade and Pride Celebration in Lithia park, vendor booths will be open on Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in “Pride Plaza” (Claycombe Plaza) at 40 North Main St. in Ashland.

Saturday evening the Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s Green Show will present a salute to the courageous musical stars who took great risks by coming out - and made the world a better place when they did. Also, Ashland’s Variety Theater will show movies with gay friendly themes.

SOPride celebrants can continue Saturday’s festivities by participating in “Pride Hopping” at Ashland clubs and restaurants. To date participating establishments include The Black Sheep (51 North Main on the Plaza), Alex’s on the Plaza, Paddy’s Pub (23 South 2nd St.), and Tabu (76 N. Pioneer). The list is expected to grow.

In an effort to build regional support for the SOPride Festival 2011, organizers marched with their 50 foot rainbow flag in this year’s Medford Pear Blossom Festival Parade, the Grants Pass Boatnik Memorial Day Parade, the Portland Pride Parade, the San Francisco Pride Parade, and the Klamath Fourth of July Parade. Crowds cheered the entry and many people promised to come to Ashland for the SOPride Festival. Based on this response, organizers anticipate a substantial increase in the number of participants and supporters for this second year of the SOPride Festival.

For more information about SOPride, pictures from SOPride Festival 2010, guidelines and entry forms for the SOPride Parade and vendor booths, a list of this year’s SOPride Festival supporters, and more SOPride news go to the official SOPride website: www.sopride.org.

To arrange interviews with SOPride president Gina DuQuenne or SOPride Festival 2011 Grand Marshal Beth Coye, please contact Deborah Rothschild. (Phone: 541.531.3730) (Email: rothschilddeb@yahoo.com)

SOPRIDE Festival 2011 Grand Marshal
Beth F. Coye, Commander, United States Navy (Retired)



Retired Navy Commander Beth F. Coye, known in Oregon as a public advocate and writer, has fought for the rights of military gays and lesbians over a span of many years. She lobbied on Capitol Hill with the primary Repeal-Don't Ask, Don't Tell GLBT interest group, Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN), as both a Board member and a member of its Military Advisory Council.

Beth has also written extensively about equal rights and freedom for the GLBT community and her op-eds have been published throughout the country. Perhaps her most piercing op-ed was *Time for Senator McCain to Support Ending the Military's 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' Policy*, THE SEATTLE TIMES, Dec. 3, 2010, available at: http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/opinion/2013590412_guest04coye.html.

Born and raised in a Navy family, she subsequently served 21 years of active duty as a naval officer, which included 3 tours of intelligence duty as well as a commanding officer assignment. Beth speaks passionately and personally about why our country and our politico-military leaders must act so that *all* of its military men and women are

treated with dignity, respect and honor. She first felt the sting of discrimination while serving as a young lieutenant in the '60s and being turned down for a top job purely because of her gender. Later, she helped open up opportunities for Navy women, including serving on ships and attending the military academies.

During 2010, the tumultuous year of bringing down Don't Ask Don't Tell, Commander Coye originated and edited an important document, "We Are Family Too", a Book of Letters by 37 former and retired military gays and lesbians. The Pentagon Study Group was more readily able to understand the need for repeal through its reading of this book of personal stories. [WE ARE FAMILY TOO (2010), available at:<http://www.scribd.com/doc/44499016/We-Are-Family-Too-Letters-to-the-Pentagon-from-LGB-Military-Voices>.]

Beth lives in Ashland with her longtime companion of over 30 years, Esther Bell, and their two bichons, Callie and Willie.

-30-

Featured Entertainers for the SOPride Celebration



MELISSA LI & THE BARELY THEIRS

Website: www.melissali.com

Short Description: Rock band challenges Asian-American stereotypes one song at a time.

Sets: Melissa Li & The Barely Theirs has enough material to perform one 40-minute set without breaks. This pop/rock band challenges stereotypes not only through the content of their music, which deals with family, race, sex, and love, but also simply because the lead singer/songwriter is a proud Asian-American queer woman. The band confronts the assumptions often made about Asian-American

women and the rock music gives this community much-needed visibility in the arts.

Longer description: Melissa Li & The Barely Theirs are an All-American rock band headed by a queer Asian-American frontwoman. Through music - catchy original pop songs channeling country, jazz, blues, and everything in between - MLBT tackles love, loss, sex, race, and pride with unpretentious candor and self-reflective humor, punctuated with a distinct feminist edge. MLBT is a 4-piece band that features Melissa Li (lead singer/acoustic guitar), Ashley Baier (drums), Darren Lipper (bass), and Chris Takita (electric guitar). All of the songs come from a deeply personal place, and Melissa Li often peppers the show with funny and inspiring anecdotes between the music. The band often pokes fun at themselves as well, interacting with the audience or breaking out into choreographed dance interludes. The show is generally PG and can be very family-friendly. We have a few comedy songs about queer sex that are generally for mature teens and adults, but we can cut these songs if they pose a problem.

Bios: Melissa Li & The Barely Theirs is a pop/rock outfit that channels country, folk, and blues. Known for having a fresh sound, rich songwriting, and a distinctive voice, lead singer Melissa Li has been nationally recognized as one of the best emerging singer-songwriters of her generation. Her music has been lauded by the press, including *Curve*, *Hyphen*, *Bitch*, *The Boston Globe*, and *Giant Robot*. Formerly part of *Good Asian Drivers*, which scored an *OUTMusic Award* nomination in 2009, Melissa formed MLBT with drummer Ashley Baier, guitarist Chris Takita, and bassist Darren Lipper. Most notably, they have performed at Bowery Poetry Club, Milwaukee PrideFest, Toronto Pride, and many other venues across the country and in Canada.

Community: Melissa Li & The Barely Theirs, though not a "girl band" in the strictest sense, recognizes the support they get from several communities, including the feminist, queer, and Asian-American communities. These communities have supported Melissa Li as an artist early on in her career over a decade ago. They still make up much of her fan base. Despite the messages in her music, whether blatantly discussing queer politics or singing a universal song about falling in love, the visibility of a strong Asian-American lesbian in the music industry is important to these communities not only in the United States but internationally as well. This past summer, MLBT has performed at Toronto Pride, Milwaukee Pride, PhaseFest in DC, and even as musical guests at a *Butch Burlesque* show in NYC. Much of the band's appeal is that the music itself transcends labels and stereotypes. Born in Hong Kong, Li is a Chinese-American

immigrant and Takita is a first generation Japanese-American. In an industry where Asian artists are associated with hip hop acts or YouTube cover artists, the band takes bold steps in creating an "All-American" sound that draws musical comparisons with Maroon 5, Sara Bareilles, and Ani DiFranco. They are proud to represent Asian-Americans in the kind of pop music traditionally performed by Caucasian-Americans.