

Q-News

Winnipeg

RAINBOW CHOIR CELEBRATES A MILESTONE

Darrin Jolicoeur, the new president of Rainbow Harmony Project's board of directors, opened his first board meeting in an unusual setting – the backyard of a Spence Street home. There's nowhere else he would have wanted to be on this hot Sunday afternoon in August.

"I love this choir," says Jolicoeur, his voice filled with emotion. "It's changed my life." Sure it sounds dramatic but Jolicoeur means it. "This choir played a big role in my coming out," continues Jolicoeur, "and I've made many good friends."

It's probably safe to say that few people in the Winnipeg GLBT community haven't seen a performance by the Rainbow Harmony Project. And yet the choir is only now entering its 10th year this season. For a volunteer organization, surviving 10 years is an achieve-

ment worth celebrating. But this choir has done so much more than merely survive.

Even its first rehearsal at Norwood United Church in 1999 was unusual. More than 60 enthusiastic singers turned out for that first uncertain step. One of the songs sung at the first rehearsal was "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," directed by Scott Naugler. Last year, RHP, under the direction of Vic Hooper and accompanist Rob Lindey, took that song to the Winnipeg Music Festival and won top honours in their class.

This season will be one of reflection and celebration for all the great years since 1999. Thanks to the commitment and passion of talented musical leadership, and the hard work of its members, RHP has thrived, and, in turn, offered outstanding music to the community.

"Let's think about what RHP means to each of us, and consider what we can give back." Says Jolicoeur.

One of the founding organizers of the choir was acclaimed singer, songwriter Jeff Staflund. RHP has invited Jeff to perform at its Many Gifts concert in December in recognition of his important role. RHP also extends a welcome to all alumni – from those who were at the first rehearsal and to all those who have been part of the choir over the years – to join them for this celebratory season.

To accommodate those who cannot commit to an entire season, alumni are invited to two special rehearsals with the choir in preparation for singing two songs on stage at the Many Gifts Concert on December 6 at 7:30 p.m. at Crescent Fort Rouge United Church.

Manitoba

B-TOWN'S FIRST PRIDE GETS OFF TO A WET START BUT DOES NOT DISAPPOINT

by Sonja Jensen-MacDonald

This was the first year a free, outdoor Pride event was planned for Brandon, but stormy weather on July 19 proved to be a total party-pooper. Forcing a last-minute cancellation, heavy rain, lightning and thunder put a damper on a fundraising barbecue organized by Brandon's Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC). However, the day was anything but a washout, since the Pride social that evening was one of the best in years.

The weather cleared by suppertime, and upon my arrival at B-Town's North Hill Inn (with some excellent dancing companions) I was greeted by some very familiar faces. Most notable was Bud (a blow-up doll graciously bear-

ing a basket of free condoms and safety gloves in support of syphilis prevention campaign www.getiton.ca). Also in attendance was the Healthy Penis -- very prolific and eager to be played with.

Performances and entertainment were offered by Ms. Club 200's Ivana Hide (fabulous in white boots and black leather pants), the insanely sexy Anal Jolie and Brandon's own Kristie Kreme amongst others. With amicable staff and a dance floor like a mirrored hockey rink (much more glamorous than it sounds), I enjoyed an inappropriate number of well-poured cocktails while swooning over a rainbow cake.

SERC was well aware that no social is complete without a prize draw, deli-

cious buns (more than willingly supplied by Kuipers Bakery) and assorted deli meats, pickles and veggies.

With attendance between 130 and 140 people, it was one of Brandon's largest Pride events to date. But folks in the Wheat City have been holding annual Pride events for quite some time. "Brandon has been having socials for years now," says Cameron Chappell of SERC. "A while ago it was a very secret thing but as time has gone on it has become more public." For future Prides, SERC has resolved to offer similar events rain or shine. Inclement weather will be dealt with either by moving things indoors or we will "just tent it up".