

A sense of community

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Absolut Hillcrest Mardi Gras brought out our community to raise funds for scholarships that are awarded to LGBT college students or allies. Despite the frigid temperature, (48 degrees, it felt like Chicago!), many in our community showed they care about the next generation.



While the Hillcrest Business Association and its board of trustees decided to pull out of the event at the last minute, the board of trustees of the GSDBA Charitable Foundation rose to the occasion and shouldered the planning of the entire event.

The first order of business for the Foundation was ensuring that we made the event better than ever and I think we accomplished our task. Party promoter and event planner impresario, Bill Hardt and his staff, took the event to the next level. What is more amazing is Hardt helped us put on the fabulous event with only 4-weeks of planning.

In just 4-weeks, producing an event that usually takes more than 3-months was a herculean task. There are community members who deserve a special shout out: Tootie and the Lips Girls, Paris and her fantastic boy dancers, Big Mike Phillips and his fantastic bartenders and Danny Becht for coordinating many of our volunteers.

In addition, our corporate sponsors stepped forward once again this year. Absolut, Budweiser, Jagermeister, Viejas Casino, California Bank & Trust, *Rage Magazine*, The Pride Card and your very own *San Diego LGBT Weekly*. While our corporate sponsors could have dropped out due to the late planning of the event, they all had the right corporate philosophy; we want to help the college students.

While charitable community events can bring out the best in our community, sometimes they also bring out the dysfunction amongst some of our members.

DJ John Joseph posted this comment on Facebook:

“Unfortunately ... I talked to some Mo’s staff about this the other day, however, and even though Mo’s refuses to have anything to do with it, I was told access to Mo’s will be blocked off during this festival (except to those at the festival, of course).” Further Joseph suggested that people come hear him DJ and avoid Absolut Mardi Gras completely on the Rich’s Facebook page.

Joseph was simply misinformed, and spreading incorrect information, which is so disappointing. While the community was coming together to keep providing the more than \$125,000 in scholarships that have been awarded to date, some felt the need to be divisive. It was not about helping those who want to get an education; it was about some other agenda.

What made Joseph’s comments even more incredible is that both Urban Mo’s and Rich’s were supporters of the event. Nick Moede, owner of Rich’s, offered free staging equipment, as well as assistance promoting the event. Chris Shaw, owner of Urban Mo’s, provided food items and helped us make sure that our fencing of the event was up to code.

I could take the low road and say people should boycott events that Joseph DJs but I am an adult. I would never suggest hurting a young uninformed man’s income, unlike what Joseph suggested for our scholarship recipients.

While social media has many benefits, it can also be a cauldron of misinformation. You should always consider the source and whether they have the correct information. That is why there are so many social media scams that are successful; many take posted information as fact when it simply is not.

While I believe the Hillcrest Business Association did not serve its members by giving up its portion of the proceeds from Mardi Gras, what is more concerning is its leadership making political an event that is about the kids.

Sometimes things are about more than the cult of personality and personal political conflicts. Can’t we just help the next generation succeed?

Most of the San Diego LGBT community, and beyond, said yes. Thank you San Diego!

STAMPP CORBIN

PUBLISHER

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