

Drag party helps raise scholarships for students



Drag king Manny Dingo takes to the stage to Prince's "My name is Prince." Dingo and four queens danced the night away at the Bancroft Eatery and Brew Pub to raise money for local students. / SARAH SOBANSKI Staff

It was standing room only around the stage at the Bancroft Eatery and Brew Pub. LGBT+ community members and allies sipping on rainbow drinks and wearing rainbow costumes cheered as men and women dressed in drag strutted down the aisles between their tables. The kings and queens plucked tips from the hooters and hollers together celebrating Pride and raising money for local students.



Simma Downe prepares to transform on stage, changing to wearing a floor length cocktail gown in seconds.
/ SARAH SOBANSKI Staff



Penelope Strange performs to Ariana Grande's 'No Tears Left to Cry.'
/ SARAH SOBANSKI Staff



Audience members attended the show in rainbow colours and costumes to show their support for Pride and the LGBT+ community. / SARAH SOBANSKI Staff

The event was Bancroft's first and 'hopefully annual' drag show, hosted by Century 21's Curtis Sibley. Stars of the show included Simma Downe (Mitchel Bowers), Penelope (Jorrie Cull) and Lizzy Strange (Lisa Morrison), Mona Pleasure (Jonah Patterson) and Manny Dingo (Joe Smith). Between specialty cocktails, an auction and more than 140 tickets sold, the show managed to raise more than \$4,000.



From left, Mona Pleasure, Penelope Strange, Curtis Sibley, Lizzy Strange, Simma Downe and, in front, Manny Dingo grab a candid break after the show. / SUBMITTED

Sibley is hoping to turn that \$4,000 into scholarships for a handful of Alphabet Club members at North Hastings High School over the next two years.

"A bunch of friends were telling me that I should host a drag show because it would be a lot of fun to host it in Bancroft," said Sibley thinking back to how the show came to be. He said he was inspired to raise money for local students because, looking back, that's when he "struggled the most" as a member of the LGBT+ community.

"It was definitely through schooling and my younger years and a lot of high school. So I thought if I could help those kids that would be really awesome," said Sibley.

Sibley said the scholarships could go to LGBT+ members of the club or allies in the club.

"The way I see it is, if there's a straight person in the group who is fighting for and helping a gay student who is having a hard time they should be entitled to it just as well," he said, but he wasn't sure how the selection process would happen yet. He said he was planning on talking to the school soon to see how best to select recipients.

Sibley said awareness and acceptance of the LGBT+ community has improved since he was in school. He said there are "a lot more out students" at the high school than there was when he and

Bowers went there. Both were raised in Bancroft.

Sibley wanted to thank the pub for donating the venue for the fundraiser and accommodations for the show's performers. He also wanted to thank his family.

"Without [them] I wouldn't have had the courage to put [the show] on in my hometown," he said.

Sibley said he hoped the event also spread awareness to LGBT+ community members that he was a "gay realtor." He suggested they might be more comfortable reaching out to purchase properties in the area knowing there were like-minded people and allies in the community.