

# MICHIGAN IS WHERE THE GIRLS ARE

**Marguerite Tschirhart gives Midwestern girls a place to let their hair down. By Jennifer Corday**

"I have always felt that we have a wonderful and attractive community here in Michigan," says party promoter Marguerite Tschirhart. "Someone just needed to put on events to make the girls want to come out."

Tschirhart started producing parties in 2005 and founded her company, WhereTheGirlsR, later that year. Initially, Tschirhart would email friends on a weekly basis with news on where to go and what to do.

"Some of my friends nicknamed me Julie the Cruise Director," she laughs. "My friends forwarded the emails to their friends, and it grew rapidly from there. Women I didn't know would email to ask to be put on my list." Now, she produces several parties a year throughout the state of Michigan and has plans to team up with other promoters in nearby Chicago.

When Tschirhart started out, the few gay clubs in town were in dicey areas. "People were shot in the parking lots, cars stolen—and my cousin was almost kidnapped out of one parking lot. I felt that as gay women, we shouldn't have to risk our lives to socialize," she says.

Inspired by the success of women's events like Dinah Shore, Aqua Girl and GirlFest, Tschirhart started throwing

parties in Royal Oak (the locals call it the Greenwich Village of Michigan), Ferndale, Birmingham, Ann Arbor and Pontiac. Most of her events feature live music, primarily from local lesbian musicians. "We have a great music scene in Metro Detroit, and I'm continually amazed with the many talented artists here."

Tschirhart says she loves the mix of women in Michigan and is frustrated when the media portrays Midwestern women as lumberjack dykes. "Often, people stereotype Michigan girls to be girls in flannel shirts and army boots, but we have a cross-section, just like anywhere else—we have women from Egypt, India, Russia, the Middle East and everywhere. I think it's just beautiful, the diversity. There are so many good-looking women!"

Besides being surrounded by hotties, Tschirhart says one of the most rewarding parts of her job as a promoter is giving back to the community and helping those in need. "That is what I love about doing events—helping people." She puts on a yearly Super Bowl party to raise money for the Royal Oak Animal Shelter. "It's one of the only no-kill shelters in the area. They lost their funding and are relying totally on donations." She has worked with local LGBT nonprofits like the Triangle Foundation and hosted the women's after-party for the yearly LGBT film festival. She worked with the local chapter of the Human Rights Campaign to put on an *L Word* premiere party and recently helped start a local women's networking group.

The economic downturn in the United States has been especially hard on Michigan, the heart of the American automotive industry. "In this economy, we need that more than ever," she says. "In Michigan, almost one out of every five people is unemployed, so it's been really challenging to put on quality events for our community when so many women stay home and have house parties to save money."

In between parties, Tschirhart works as an attorney, and this summer she launched WhereTheGirlsR.com, a website she hopes will help lesbians find the hippest happenings across the nation. "The site is very easy to use and navigate. I want to link up with other lesbian websites to promote each other's sites," she says. ■



Marguerite Tschirhart (middle) with go-go dancers



frown on me for claiming the title 'lesbian' while occasionally sporting a packy."

Marshall started doing drag in San Francisco and performed with The ShugaGlida Blues Revue at the 2006 Fresh Meat Festival. Now she performs with one of Portland's newest drag troupes, the River City Riders. "When I came to Portland I was embraced by the most amazing community of homos

Left to right: Kelly Murrin (Ramington Hancock Steele), Amy Holsher (Levi Camino) and Kaki Marshall (Mr. Phister)

# THOSE WHO PLAY TOGETHER, STAY TOGETHER



Portland promoter and drag king extraordinaire creates community with a few tubes of lube.  
By Nina Lary

When asked what her week looks like, Kaki Marshall replies without a hint of irony: "Mondays and Thursdays I have drag king practice with the River City Riders, and Tuesdays and Wednesdays I work in a government meth lab. No, seriously." That leaves her Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays to plan Portland, Ore.'s most kick-ass lesbian dance parties.

Marshall worked in music promotion for 20 years before she moved to Portland in 2006. When she arrived, Pop Tart, a deep-grooves girl party at Holocene in Southeast Portland, was a sexier alternative to the city's only lesbian bar, dubbed the E-Room. With the encouragement of longtime friend and Pop Tart founder Shoshanna Oppenheim, Marshall took the party from a Sunday afternoon romp to an edgy all-night ladyfest.

Marshall's reputation drew in DJ superpowers and helped launch her next and most popular party, Double Down. "We employ resident DJs from across the LGBTQ spectrum, and that is the crowd we are catering to," she says.

"I am a 37-year-old lesbian," says Marshall. "But it has felt important to me in the recent past to identify as queer. I found myself feeling alienated by some of the older lesbians in my life a few years back. A few select groups tended to

I have ever seen and I have come to realize that 'lesbian' is mine to reclaim."

Marshall wants to unite her fellow queer folk through causes. Her newest venture, Lube Job, pits well-known members of the community against each other in a 10-foot-long pool of lube to raise money for their favorite local nonprofit.

"The feeling of putting on a huge fest for throngs of beautiful homos that raised thousands for people who make incredible differences in all our lives," she says, "that seriously does it for me!"

"I feel that the community is stronger and healthier when we all play together," says Marshall. "Parties are fun. But let's do something with all that positive energy." ■

## THE DIGITS

**POP TART**  
Second Sunday  
of the month at  
Holocene, 101 SE  
Morrison

**DOUBLE DOWN**  
Fourth Saturday  
of the month at  
Holocene

**LUBE JOB**  
First Wednesday  
of the month at  
Red Cap Garage,  
1035 SW Stark

LEILA HOFSTEIN