

NEWS

- Local
- Mind, Body & Soul
- Sports
- Archives

OPINION

- Editorials
- Letters
- Columnists
- Message Boards

A&E

- The Gay Agenda
- Calendar
- Movies
- Books

LIVING

- Horoscopes
- Comics
- Classifieds
- Obituaries
- Salt Lake METRO

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# Local News

## Queer Prom is a Unique Spin on an Old Tradition

by Darren Tucker  
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It's a typical night for the prom committee. Planning decorations, publicity, mass e-mailings ... It's a daunting task for a bunch of already busy teens.

And this group of teens puts just a little extra effort into the task because it may be a typical night for the prom committee, but it is anything but a typical prom.

They are planning "Queer Prom," to be held April 30 from 8:00 p.m. to midnight at the Salt Lake Hardware Building, 105 N. 400 West.

"It's an amazing event," said Jennifer Nuttall, committee advisor. "It's a place where they can dress how they want, bring who they want and feel safe, affirmed, and supported."

Queers in Action, the youth leadership group at the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Community Center of Utah, is staging the prom. They're local high school students, tired of the "traditional" proms at their own schools.

"The schools publicize they have safe policies," said committee member Lauren Bradley. "But there are kids who don't feel safe. If the school can't create events like that, we can."

This year's theme is "Time Warp," chosen intentionally because it is not a political statement. Committee members said last year's theme was intentionally political; this year's is all about having fun.

Decorations will reflect decades of change. Vinyl records will hang next to CDs and a special lounge area will feature furniture from the last several decades.

Last year, about 250 kids attended the prom, and "it was totally amazing how thankful everyone was," Nuttall said.

Committee member Amanda Krebs said there are plenty of differences between a school prom and the Queer Prom. "It's not all formal wear," she said. "Some kids will come in drag and some in punk, or just t-shirt and jeans. The point is, they can be whoever they want, wear whatever they want."

But every young person should have a chance to participate in some prom traditions, and the Queer Prom is no different. There will be a prom king and queen, chosen at "the Big, Big Event" at the Center last Saturday. They'll be announced at 10:00 at the prom. There will also be food and decorations and the traditional promenade.

What there won't be is the fear, anger and "permission slips" featured at school proms.

"This event is for all youth," Nuttall said. "A lot of kids don't fit in, this is a safe place for everyone."

BJ Olsen, a member of the committee, said he plans to attend both his school prom and the Queer Prom. He plans to have fun at the gay event, and maybe make a bit of a statement at his school prom.

He's taking a same-gender date.

"I am afraid to go, but I have taken so much crap this year ..." he said. "Well, I just have to."

Every member of the committee was quick to point out the idea behind this year's Queer Prom is not all about politics. It's about fun—and a chance to experience something every high school student should experience at least once in life.

Take committee member Antonio Diaz. He says the thing he looks forward to most at the Queer Prom is his date. He doesn't think he could talk him into going to a school prom.

And that is exactly what the Queer Prom is all about.

Advance tickets to the prom are \$8.00 and are available at The Center, online at [queersinaction@hotmail.com](mailto:queersinaction@hotmail.com) or by calling 539-8800, extension 13. Tickets are \$10 at

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the door. The Queer Prom is strictly for youth ages 13-20.

