

# Sweethearts and singles

Annual Women's Valentine's Dance at Dayton Woman's Club

BY JENNIFER HANAUER LUMPKIN



**It's time to** dress up and shine bright like a diamond! Shake a tail feather and/or your bonbon! Gimme that night fever and cut footloose! This Saturday is the Greater Dayton LGBT Center's annual Women's Valentine's Dance.

This event for lesbian and bisexual women in the Miami Valley will be held at the Dayton Woman's Club in downtown Dayton. Revelers are encouraged to dress up for the occasion and can anticipate catered hors d'oeuvres, raffle prizes and a cash bar. The dance is for both couples and singles, and while there won't be speed-dating as there was at last year's dance, event organizers are sharp to the fact the dance offers a unique opportunity for connections to be made in a festive environment.

"This year we're going to provide neon-colored wristbands for anyone who wants to advertise they're single and available," said Clara Jackson, event organizer and board member of the Greater Dayton LGBT Center.



The historic Dayton Woman's Club on Ludlow Street

Last year, the event had 185 guests, and the center is expecting more this year. In addition to the throngs of locals that will be at the dance, the event attracts many out-of-towners as well.

"A lot of people from Cincinnati come,

some women from Columbus, women from Indiana and from northern Ohio – Greenville, Sidney, Urbana," said Jackson. "It draws a pretty good crowd."

As in years past, C & C Entertainment will provide the music for the evening.

"They've been with the dance since the beginning, so there's a lot of continuity to it," Jackson said. "It will be a mix of fast and slow songs, country and popular bands' tunes. They'll play tunes that women in their 60s and 70s will love, and they'll play tunes that younger women love [...] there'll be a lot of the classic dance tunes from the '80s that everybody still dances to."

The dance will also have a photographer on hand to immortalize the event. Penny Collins Photography will be available to do portraits for \$15, which includes a digital copy of the images.

The annual Women's Valentines Dance began approximately a decade ago as a service for lesbians and bisexual women by the Dayton by the Greater Dayton LGBT Center, an organization that, at the time, was run almost entirely by men.

"They did a fantastic job in keeping it going and keeping the energy in it even though women weren't coming out to join the board," said Jackson. "Now we've got three women on the board, so we're slowly moving the numbers up."

The Greater Dayton LGBT Center has been serving sexual minorities in the Miami Valley since 1976. Its mission is to create programs to enhance the lives of people in the community.

"[The center] did a think tank back around 2000, brought a bunch of women from the community together and had an

Jackson also sees augmenting the event in the future to span the length of the weekend and increase the draw for out-of-towners.

"In the coming years, I'd like to have more women involved so we can have more interesting things happening at the dance as far as making it a weekend event, maybe something else happening Friday night or maybe a brunch on Sunday morning," Jackson said. "But it takes people willing to get involved. That's our push right now, trying to get women to be more involved with the center and participate and create what it is that they're wanting."

Join the festivities at the Dayton Woman's Club this Saturday and take a step with the Greater Dayton LGBT Center toward a more involved community of lesbian and bisexual women. Then take another step, and another, and before you know it, you're dancing!

*The Greater Dayton LBGT Center presents the Annual Women's Valentine's Dance on Saturday, Feb. 15 at 7 p.m. at the Dayton Woman's Club, 225 N. Ludlow St. in downtown Dayton. Tickets are \$10 for Greater Dayton LGBT Center members or \$15 for non-members and will be sold for cash at the door. For more information about the Greater Dayton LGBT Center, please visit dayton-lgbtcenter.org.*



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– Clara Jackson, Greater Dayton LGBT Center board member

outside facilitator come in and help move the group through the kinds of programs that they wanted from the LGBT Center," said Jackson. "My understanding from the past president of the board is that it boiled down to social opportunities that did not involve going out to bars. So the dance was one of the things that grew out of that, along with a book club and a dinner group. All three events are still continuing from that time."

As much as the dance is meant to be a night of merriment and mingling, it will also serve the bigger picture purpose of putting a spotlight on the Greater Dayton LGBT Center.

"One of our hopes for the dance every year is that it will encourage women to start getting involved with the center, to identify and create other programs and services and help deliver them," Jackson said. "Women are really not represented on the board as much as we would like. That's one of the key things with the dance, other than providing the social opportunity, is to get women attached to the center and hopefully encourage them to join if they're not already members and start participating and saying, 'How can we join with the center and get more of what we want for ourselves?'"