

Thank you, Jake and Bridget, members of each Division's boards, team managers and players of the Rose City Softball Association. And thank you to the E-Room for hosting our 2009 Opening Ceremonies this evening.

Joey and I are honored to be here today, on the 15th anniversary of the RCSA. Before we arrived in Portland 16 years ago, we knew there was no gay softball league. Our former teammates in San Francisco had laughed at us when we told them we'd start a one here. Well, they aren't laughing any more. When players from other cities come to Portland for tournaments, we take great pride in how you make them feel welcome. They love this league, they love our tournaments, but most of all, they love the hospitality you show them when they visit this beautiful city.

At our first Portland Pride festival, we went around with clipboards that had signs on the back that said "Gay Softball Signups". That weekend, over 70 people expressed interest in playing ball the following summer. Two particular people stepped forward and assumed crucial roles to help us organize and start this league; **former Open Division Commissioner and ASA Hall of Fame member Scott Franklin; and former Women's Division Commissioner and NAGAAA Hall of Fame member Toni Carr.** Together, we created the structure and charter documents that still serve as the foundation of our league. Scott, Toni, Joey and I served as the original interim board members until the first full elections by the membership. Thanks to the transparency embraced by your league's leadership, those documents are available to view online at rosecitysoftball.org.

In any given year, the strength of your league is its membership, whether it is five teams and 75 players in 1995 or 28 teams and 400 players in 2009.

Your teams travel across the U.S. and Canada to World Series and regional tournaments, and bring home trophies for their sponsors. Your league is about many things, with softball being just one of them. It is about community, it is about friendship, it is about self-esteem, it is about working together to achieve common goals. As members of RCSA, some of you have met your partners, others have found new massage therapists or home renovation experts. I mean, you get out of it what you put into it, right? You've networked with your new friends to find jobs or a new place to live. You have supported each other in countless ways, both on and off the fields. You have created a place that welcomes everyone in our community, to share those things which YOU love...the game and the summers we hope will never end, and in the process, you have created memories that will stay with you for a lifetime.

Over the years, so many people have stepped up at the team and league levels to take leadership responsibility, that it would be impossible to name each and every one. In addition to those people we've already told you about, we'd like to recognize just a few more of the people who are responsible for bringing your league to where it is today:

2002 saw Portland's first Gay Softball World Series, a tremendous accomplishment borne of the hard work and dedication of this league's leadership. **We salute Roy Melani, Tim Bias, and everyone responsible**

for bringing World Series to Portland and showing how it's done best.

No one could ask for a better NAGAAA representative than Roy, and no better spokesperson for the RCSA than Tim Bias.

Our appreciation goes out to EVERYONE who has served on the Board in the roles of Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Members at Large and Treasurer, and every individual and business that has sponsored a team in this league. Your commitment and dedication to your community are appreciated by EACH AND EVERY ONE of us.

Finally, we would like to recognize the few individuals who were here from the start in 1995, *and who are still involved with the league today:*

- from the Women's Division team the Rough Riders, one of our first elected board members, who brought in a board trainer to teach us how nonprofit boards work together effectively, and one of our dearest friends, **Kim Conner**.

- from the former Open Division's JOQs team, one of the league's first managers, the man who brought us our first corporate sponsor, and one of the nicest guys we know, **Lloyd Perry**.

-also from the JOQ's team, a man who was the heart and soul of that team for 14 years, and this year is the coach of the Open Division Bella Boys, **James Kinniburgh**.

- from the Open Division team the Titans, a player who also became an ASA umpire in the process, and who loves this game as much or more than anyone I know, **Carl Wylie**.

-and last, but certainly not least, --I-- would like to recognize and thank someone who has let me share in his life and his dreams, a man without whose energy and enthusiasm the realization of those dreams, including this league, would not have been possible, my husband, **Joey Burgos**.

We know that 2009 is going to be a great year for the RCSA, and we all should be very proud to be represented by the Current Women's and Open Division Commissioners, Bridget Lahm and Jake Packer. Please give them a big hand as well.

Lastly, please know that without the partnership created by your team sponsors, this league would not exist. Please send a big shout out to YOUR OWN team sponsors this year, and thank them for their continued support of the RCSA in these difficult economic times.

We thank you all so very much for this honor and for making the RCSA not only the largest gay and lesbian sports organization in the state of Oregon for each of the last 15 years, but for being part of the best damned softball league in the entire nation.

By the way, there is someone we left off our list...intentionally. You'll find out why in just a moment.

Dale, come up here with us, won't you?

It is our extreme honor to present to you one of our favorite and one of the most loved people in this league. When we held our first player signups in the Spring of 1995, he was there before Scott, Toni, Joey and I arrived. He was sitting in the front row of the room, **on crutches, and his leg in a full cast!** We're like, "Are you sure you're in the right place?" and he told us "I'm here because I want to play softball". **Dale is the first official member of the RCSA.** He has been a true friend, a motivator, a coach, one of the most enthusiastic and upbeat people we've ever known on AND off the fields, and the conscience of every single team he has been on the last 15 years. **From the Titans team, will you please give a big round of applause for Dale Hillman.**