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Chicago Spirit Brigade Raises Funds for Life-Threatening Challenges

by Winnie McCroy

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(Source: You Tube)

On August 28, the Chicago Spirit Brigade will hold their 5th Annual Starry Night benefit, a fundraiser to help organizations supporting the LGBT community. They hope to raise in excess of \$14,000 this year, to contribute to charities like the Howard Brown Health Center, Lesbian Community Care Project, Night Ministry and Project Fierce Chicago, helping with health needs, housing, employment and more.

"Starry Night is a beautiful event, an evening of drinks, dining, and noshes," said Aricka Flowers. "You meet the beneficiaries, hear from them and how CSB impacted them, learn about the work that is impacting them, and about other organizations you'd like to help. They also have door prizes, raffles, and extended cocktail hour and some cute performances. Dress is business casual."

The Chicago Spirit Brigade is an LGBT and ally cheer, dance, drill and rally team that raises funds for organizations serving people that life-threatening challenges.

"For me, personally, I am interested in helping the LGBT community, was aware of CSB and liked their mission and the fact that I could use my talents as a dancer toward a good cause," said Aricka Flowers. "More than performing, it's about being able to use your talent to raise money for people who need assistance. It's a good way for career professionals to use their talent to help their community."

Much of the membership of CSB is LGBT, but Flowers is a straight woman; all cheerleaders are welcome. All of the Brigade's performances happen at LGBT-oriented festivals, Pride parades and Pride fests, Marketdays, Pride fest, and in partnership with gay nightclubs in Edgewater.



(Source: You Tube)

"The organizations are just so thankful for what we do, and hold little events for us where they give us plaques and stuff," said Flowers. "We have forged tight relationships and work with them year in and year out, but bring in new ones each year. They come to the events and help us raise money. It becomes a supportive relationship, because we're helping them, and they're involved as well, and not just collecting the check."

Starry Night will be an opportunity for the CSB to raise funds for their Plus 25% Matching Program, which allows them to donate 25% of every dollar they raise for their beneficiaries.

"Last year, CSB raised well over \$13,600 at our performance and rally events," said Flowers. "With our Plus 25% Match, we were able to contribute an additional \$17,600+ to local charities. Over the life of CSB in the last 10 years, we have raised more than \$100,000 for more than 30 Chicagoland and Midwest non-profits."

Come help CSB raise funds to help Chicago's LGBT community by attending Starry Night, at 7:30 p.m. on August 28 at Morgan Manufacturing, 401 N Morgan St., Chicago, IL 60642.

For more information, visit <http://www.chicagospiritbrigade.org/#news/cg3b>



Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York, where she writes about local restaurants in her food blog, <http://brooklyniscookin.blogspot.com/>

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