

Pride party returns to Maynooth

By Sarah Sobanski

Maynooth Pride is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Hosted by Ro Munich at the Arlington tomorrow night, Maynooth Pride will see band Random Order return to perform, a bonfire outdoors and of course a fireworks display.

"It could only happen in a place as special as Maynooth," said Munich.

It all began when Maynooth resident Joe Shulman was directing a rendition of *Godspell* in the 1990s. Members of the play's theatre company were wearing rainbow buttons to show their support and pride in association with the LGBTQ community during production. Some asked what pride was.

"The gay and lesbian members of the company happily explained the history of the Stonewall Riots, the bathhouse raids in Toronto, and the evolution of gay rights and human rights. The marrying of all of those drives forward for us to all see each other as humans," Shulman explained.

This conversation evolved into a private celebration between the LGBTQ members of the company at a farm in Monteagle ? owned by the then-producer of the play. It was a sweet and modest gathering of about 12 people. A pinwheel fireworks display was attached to a fence.

The celebrations moved for the following years from Monteagle to Shulman's, and his partner Barry Siegrist's, property on Madawaska Road outside of Maynooth. From there it seemed to grow exponentially. Shulman and Siegrist would become the torch holder's for Maynooth Pride for the next 21 years.

"We were having gay and lesbian guests from the city and from all over the world for the 21 years that we ran it," said Shulman, noting that before the celebrations moved to the Arlington, he saw as many as 250 visitors. It was as simple as fireworks in the backyard, but it had a much grander meaning.

"It had a very interesting cross section of participation, the deputy mayor came, and there were members of the police force but not in uniform, the social service community attended. It became quite the event. People came from the city because they heard about this wonderful Pride in the country," explained Shulman.

Shulman said that the celebration is a rarity in rural Ontario where Pride tends to be an urban phenomenon. He noted with each passing year the community finds more support.

"Come out in support of Orlando, come out in defiance of Trump and [hate and homophobia in the state](#), come out and show your support of humanity," said Shulman.

Admission is \$10. Festivities get started around 9 p.m. The event's Facebook page can be found at www.facebook.com/events/1052353698184110.