

Hamilton bar to unveil wall honouring local and global LGBTQ icons

Elliot Page, k.d. lang and former Miss Gay Hamilton, Monro, are among the icons being celebrated

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John Ribson purchased this Hamilton building in 2018 and launched The Well, an LGBTQ-friendly bar and restaurant, in 2021. He's now expanding into other locations across southwestern Ontario, including London.

A bar in Hamilton is unveiling a wall Friday honouring local and international LGBTQ icons.

The Well, located at 161 Wellington St. N., will reveal a wall on Friday at 6 p.m, with over 30 musicians, artists, playwrights, drag performers, activists and LGBTQ community members who played important roles in changing legislation around gay rights.

The Hamilton location is part of a chain of LGBTQ bars and John Ribson, chief executive officer and president of The Well's chain of LGBTQ bars.

The project is called "Well Noted" and the Hamilton bar on Wellington Street is part of a chain of LGBTQ bars.

John Ribson, chief executive officer and president of The Well's chain of locations, said he got the idea for the "Well Noted" wall after visiting the historic Stonewall Inn in New York City — the site of the 1969 Stonewall Riot.

'Canada needs something like this'

Patrons fought back against a police raid on the Stonewall Inn on June 28, 1969, and the street protests that followed for several days are credited with galvanizing gay activism in New York and globally.

Ribson said the Stonewall Inn has its own wall of honour.

"They honour mainly only people that have passed, that have been instrumental in LGBTQ positive spaces, and were trail blazers or advocates or activists or did anything remarkable for the community," he said.

"I was like, 'Canada needs something like this. We don't have anything like this to recognize our trail blazers.'"

The wall is being unveiled as communities across Canada have seen rising transphobia, homophobia and hatred toward LGBTQ people.

"There's still a lot to that happening. So it's important to educate the youth that we have come a long way and we need to keep fighting and together we can win," Ribson said.

"Individually, we can't win. We have to be as a group and stay together and fight together in order to make sure our rights are not taken away."

While "Well Noted" will celebrate some well known and loved Canadian LGBTQ icons, like actor Elliot Page and musician k.d. lang, it will also highlight local pillars of the LGBTQ community.

Publicist and activist Lyla Miklos, Hamilton city employee and beloved drag mother Robin Derring and former Miss Gay Hamilton, Monro, will be among those on the wall.

Members of the the International Imperial Court System — one of the world's largest and oldest LGBTQ foundations — will be in attendance on Friday.

Community will decide future inductees

Bradley Hamacher is the operations manager at all three The Well bars, and will perform at the opening as Miss Drew.

He said having Derring on the wall, beside her friend Monroe, means a lot to himself and Ribson.

"[Derring] was the trailblazer right here in Hamilton, and a long-time friend of John and mine, so it was really beautiful that her and her best friend actually, who is still an active performer here at the well, are actually on the wall together," he said.

Ribson said there are plans to add more people to the wall once a year.

The community will decide who goes on the wall.

"Nominate someone from anywhere in Canada who inspires you. Share their story and shine a spotlight on their legacy," Ribson said.

Corrections

An earlier version of this story mistakenly identified Lyla Miklos as a Mohawk College instructor. She is in fact a Mohawk College Alumni of Distinction and an education worker with the HWDSB.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cara Nickerson is a journalist with the CBC's Ontario local news stations, primarily CBC Hamilton. She previously worked with Hamilton Community News. Cara has a special interest in stories that focus on social issues and community. Cara can be reached at cara.nickerson@cbc.ca.

With files from Aura Carreño Rosas and The Associated Press