

Community Events

Jumping around with my friends, my blond curly hair flying. Avidly watching the screen as i watch Obama's acceptance speech, my community at my side. Listening to music, moving my body with confidence, filled with love of the island and the community that I am a part of. They are filled with people I love and know, and memories good and bad are around every corner. In our island of 2500 people, the community events are a way to bring people together and to celebrate beauty and uniqueness of the place we live in. Whether the event is a contra dance, a play, a concert, or a specific celebration, people from all parts of the island, from many different backgrounds, and all ages come together.

Community events when i was a child meant be carried around in my parents arms or on their backs. There was always a pair of loving, trusting arms waiting for me. As the years passed, the highlight of the night became jumping around with my friends, clad in striped cotton tights. If it was a talk or something seemingly boring for a toddler, it meant running around outside the building, and exhausting our prominent stores of energy. Through these years i was exposed to so many different types of people, for example a holocaust survivor, the local musicians, and also off-islanders. From a young age the community events broadened my field of knowledge about many different types of things. At these gatherings I was able to see all those who I loved, play and laugh, what is better for a young child?

Lopezian community events have a place for everyone, especially the youth. In these events the youth's presence are always celebrated, and appreciated. In the teenage years it is easy to feel misunderstood, and like an outsider, theses community events always refreshed my sense of myself. In the years when I felt most alienated, I always had a place for me at these events. The events are such a gift to the youth because we learn to not exclude certain types of music and dance as "weird" or "for old people". As I have grown into myself, i find myself always in the front, dancing without self-consciousness, because I know that with this group of people, it is a appreciated thing to just let yourself go. In other places in the world teenagers are sometimes perceived as something dreadful or awful. Adults, who are not their parents, aren't seen socializing with this group of people. However, here, this is not the case. Teenagers are embraced into the community, and these events are a place to meet and share your lives with each other.

I know all the faces of this island. Though at times it is incredibly stifling, in the end, it is beneficial. At the community events youths are exposed to all types of people, music and dance. The community events have shaped the way I approach life, because of the insights i have gained from them. You can dance however you want. There is beauty in all types of music, and age doesn't need to be a social barrier. It may seem inconceivable but life lessons lie in the community events on Lopez Island. There are times when it seems incredibly difficult to live here, but when i attend a community event i am reminded of the beauty and love that Lopez Island is filled with.