nightlife

Lesbian bar Capt. Mary's Pub opens in Marigny

Site has historic ties to N.O. gay-rights icon

BY KASEY BUBNASH
Staff writer

Women haven't always been allowed on ships, maritime superstitions being what they once were. But at Capt. Mary's Pub in the Marigny, women are at the helm.

The new, nautical-themed queer bar geared toward lesbians and other sapphics is up and running at 940 Elysian Fields Ave., a historic location with deep roots in New Orleans' LGBTQ community.


BeVille

CAPT. MARY'S PUB

940 Elysian Fields Ave., New Orleans
1 p.m. to 1 a.m. daily

Owner Zalia BeVille, the mind behind St. Claude Avenue burlesque bar The AllWays Lounge & Cabaret, said she was approached "quite a while ago" regarding the Elysian Fields space, most recently home to Mag's 940 until its closure in July.

BeVille said she wasn't sure at first if she wanted to take on another project. But then, during the weekslong World Cup this summer, a queer friend complained to BeVille about having few comfortable places to watch the games.

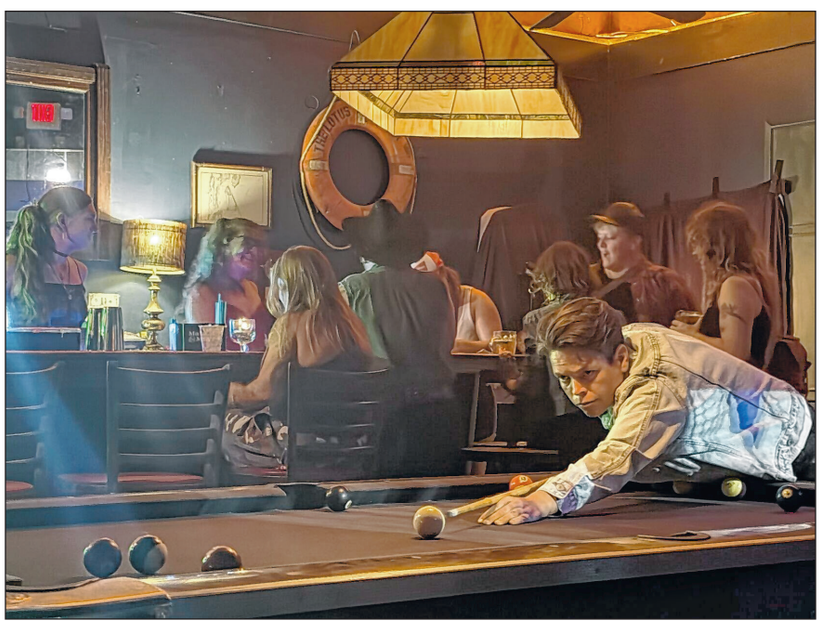
"And my brain just went 'ding,'" she said.

Capt. Mary's is an effort to further fill that gap, acting as a neighborhood pub that's heavy on the sapphic programming.

With two big-screen TVs, a pool table and a scaled-down, old-school selection of drinks that hinges on affordable favorites like pitchers of beer, BeVille hopes Capt. Mary's will become the LGBTQ community's go-to spot for watching women's sports and, of course, cheering on the Saints and Pelicans.

A small space in the back of the bar will be used to host dance parties, live music and myriad other community events and activities, from tarot readings and haircuts to voter registration.

"We want to create something here that will enhance the neighborhood," she said. "Nothing to compete with the other queer bars."



PROVIDED PHOTOS BY ZALIA BEVILLE

Maritime-themed Capt. Mary's Pub opened in the Bywater with the aim of acting as a neighborhood pub that's heavy on sapphic and lesbian programming.



The decor at Capt. Mary's Pub is inspired by owner Zalia BeVille's hometown of St. Augustine, Fla.



ARCHIVE IMAGE

Heidi Netherton sews a quilt with the names of people who have fallen victim to AIDS to memorialize friends in 1987 at Charlene's Bar in the Marigny.

"A rising tide raises all ships," BeVille added, a nod to the bar's maritime-themed name and decor, inspired by her hometown of St. Augustine, Florida.

While all are welcome at Capt. Mary's, BeVille said the bar leans lesbian as an homage to Charlene Schneider, a late gay-rights activist who ran renowned New Orleans lesbian bar Charlene's in the Elysian Fields space from 1977 to 1999.


Schneider

Before her death in 2006, Schneider fought for tangible change in New Orleans, pushing to get the city's anti-discrimination ordinance passed in 1991. Her bar was a staple of New Orleans' gay community for years, offering a rare safe space for lesbians to dance, socialize and perform, including the likes of musician Melissa Etheridge and comedian Ellen DeGeneres.

Today, bars catering specifically to lesbians are few and far between in New Orleans and across much of the Gulf Coast, even among the many gay and queer bars that dot the French Quarter, Marigny and Bywater. Wifey's Queer Bar, located just two blocks away from Capt. Mary's at 1943 N. Rampart St., opened last year with the mission of creating a comfortable space for the entire LGBTQ community, particularly lesbians, while several recurring pop-ups — Her Haus, Sapphic Speakeasy and GrrlSpot — lead the way in hosting lesbian dance parties and events.

BeVille wants to create a permanent spot for lesbians while also maintaining the location's neighborhood bar feel, so the main section of Capt. Mary's is designed to be free and open whether ticketed events are happening in the back or not. It's the kind of place where dogs are usually welcome, salty pub mix is always available, and everyone is welcome as they are.

"We want it to feel like a place to meet your chosen family," she said.

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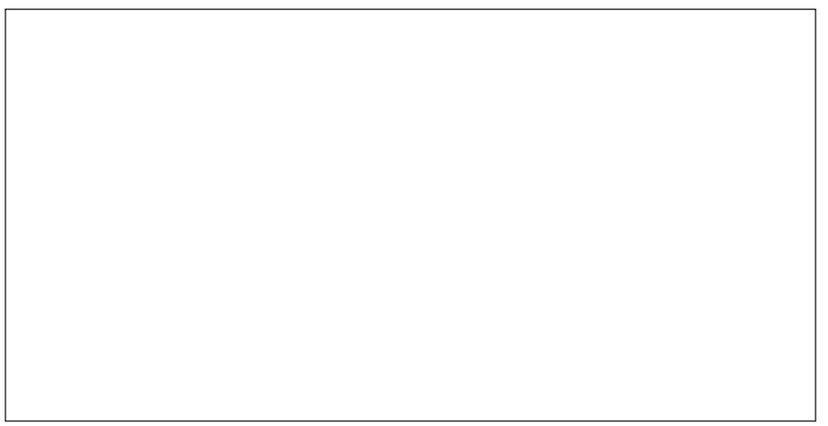
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