



# The Imperial Royal Lion Monarchy, Inc Join Us!

## Who are we?

The Imperial Royal Lion Monarchy is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to fundraising for worthy charities in Santa Clara County.

Since 1989, we have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for good works, food programs and scholarships.

Oh, we're also about camp. We're about fun, glitter, glamour, living lively and loudly, and about Unity for all.

We support the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Communities, but if you are looking for a community that can appreciate you for whoever you are, whether you're straight or gay, we welcome you to join us.

Go to our website:  
<http://www.irlm.org>

For the Imperial Court system  
<http://www.impcourt.org>

## It's an Empire, yah baby!

San Jose's IRLM is part of the Imperial Court started by San Francisco in 1965 by Jose, a drag queen that announced herself to be

the Widow Norton and the original Empress. Many reigns later, the Imperial Court network now has Courts across the US and Canada.

Each Imperial Court is run by an Emperor and Empress; But with a difference! They are elected, and the Reign lasts 1 year.

A new Emperor and Empress campaigns, and each Court votes every year; As far as we know, it is the only practicing Imperial Democracy anywhere.

## How it all started

In 1859, San Francisco's Joshua Abraham Norton pronounced himself the Emperor of the United States. He was widely celebrated, and to this day is the origin of the celebrated eccentricity-by-the-Bay. He is the guiding spirit of today's Imperial Court.

In 1965, a drag queen by the name of José became the Widow Norton, the 1<sup>st</sup> Empress of the San Francisco Imperial Court. In 1972, the girls needed an accessory, so Marcus became Emperor I after Norton. And the emperors have been accessories-after-the-fact since.

Now the Imperial Court has chapters in locations to gratify tropical beach bunnies and snow bunnies alike. Like the beach? There's a chapter in Honolulu! Like to ski? There's a chapter in Denver! Hockey? Canada. Ice fishing? Minneapolis. Fly-fishing? Boise, Idaho.

## Tapping the inner drag queen in all of us...

The Imperial Court started out as a camp empire for the Gay community, but is now open to all

who are willing to work a little and aspire to glitter, glamour and giddy fun.

### *Camp*

What is Camp? It's been part of the Gay Community for a long time and shrouded in mystery and the forbidden. But camp is just *permission for grownups to be children for awhile, to play and have fun.*

### *Investiture*

A Court is led by an Emperor/Empress. Shortly after the election, the Emperor/Empress holds an Investiture. This is where they build the actual Court.

You draft a camp name, and you're then knighted by your Emperor/Empress with a title. You can be a man/lady in waiting, a count/countess, a baron/baroness, a duke or duchess. Gender is by choice.

Now, where else outside Halloween can you men wear dresses, makeup and high heels - even if you never wanted to before? Just think of the stories you can share at the water cooler or poker night!

As the year progresses, you can go to shows, perform in shows, attend coronations in other courts, glitter up the Ducal or Crown ball. When your Royals go on the road, you can come along to show your support. The more people Royals bring with them, the better the Court looks. And believe me, looking good is very important. If you want to work and help, these are some of the ways you do it. If you just want to enjoy shows and tip the performers, it's up to you. It's all in fun, and all for a good cause.

### *The Coronation*

Imagine Mardi Gras, New Year's, the Chinese New Year, Tet, the Academy Awards and Halloween combined. This is the annual Coronation, the big weekend where one year's Reigning monarchs step down, and a new year's monarchs are elected.

If you've been going to events dressed like a Russian diplomat in sashes and medals, or in cocktail gowns with lots of glittering gems, this is where you really shine.

This is also where the waning Empire announces the amounts raised during the year, and where checks are presented to charities. For many organizations, those checks make the difference between staying open or fading away. Organizations that feed and comfort those struggling with AIDS, scholarships for young people and safe places for them to hang out, medical research in the fight against Breast Cancer.

We do this to raise desperately-needed funds for vital charities that may otherwise perish. Will you join our Emperor/Empress in keeping the dream alive?

### *The Shows*

The shows are fabulous. There's food, there's drink, there are prizes to be won in raffles. There's entertainment, glittering drag queens perform. There's the chance for you to dress up in your finest, see, and be seen. If you can karaoke, or even lip-sync, you can perform.

There's usually a door charge or cover fee. There are drink and food tickets. There are raffle tickets. And of course, tips for the performers when they perform.

And then there are those special

moments, as rare and fine as any moment under a spotlight. Truly talented performers singing acapella, moments of tenderness or absolute hilarity, and occasionally, all of you in a ring around a fire or a tree, holding hands, and swaying to a farewell song.

### **The Mission**

For more than a decade, the I.R.L.M. has raised money to support charities here in Santa Clara County. While we started out as a bunch of drag queens, our membership is now open to anybody who wants to help us in this work.

What hasn't changed is our dedication to putting on campy shows that are fun for both the audience and the performers. Rather than just appeal to our audience's sense of responsibility, we also appeal to their sense of humor. Silicon Valley may be flush with money, but there are still worthy charities that are overlooked by corporations and big foundations. These are the groups we like to work with; the groups where a contribution of only a few thousand--or even a few hundred--dollars can make a real difference. Since we incorporated, we've raised hundreds of thousands of dollars. We still support AIDS charities, but we've expanded our giving to include other organizations like breast cancer charities, food pantries and scholarship funds.

### **What can you do?**

#### **- Make a Donation**

We have lots of work to do, and the need is great. Money is good, but so are fabulous prizes for our Raffles and Auctions, Sponsorships, Food, Marketing, Promotions, Services.

#### **- Join Us**

Sweat equity is always welcome. You can help us set up shows, provide venues, props, transportation. You can help us spread the word by posting flyers, inviting friends to shows, or by joining the court. If you are a savvy fundraiser, or campaign director, the Empress and Emperor wants you!

#### **- Come to our shows!**

Wondering what to do on a Saturday night? Come see this whole other world you've never dreamt of in your wildest dreams. The drag queens in glittering gowns, big hair and attitude, the pageantry, tuxedos, ball gowns, crowns, rhinestones, sashes, big hair, leather, and lack of it, and things that defy category. Oh, and there's food, drink, music, and dancing too.

#### **- Bring new faces!**

Our goal this year is to bring unity to all communities. For too long, the IRLM have been a best kept secret of Silicon Valley. This is going to be a fabulous year, and we have many fabulous things planned. And to do these things, we need friends, volunteers and an audience.

When you join the IRLM, you will embark on an adventure like you've never dreamed of. Going places, being with people, seeing things you've never seen before, being people you've never imagined you'd be. Being a titled member of the court, wearing crowns and tiaras, tuxedos or slinky gowns. Being outrageous, being the color and pageantry. Having fun! And doing good for the community. Being drag queens, or kings, even if you're not gay! Or even being a baseball cap, jean and flannel shirt kind of guy (or girl) if you are!

Share that with your friends.

They're thirsting for adventure too.