

LEADER-POST

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Pants? Who needs pants!

Misty Harris, CanWest News Service

If you ever feel like something's holding you back but aren't sure what it is, consider this: It could be your pants.

Around the world today, the young and the young at heart are protesting the tyranny of trousers with No Pants Day. In this country alone, hundreds of underwear-clad Canadians are expected to participate in such events as pants-free pub crawls, wine tastings and barbecues intended to recognize the "freedom associated with not wearing pants."

Now in its sixth year, No Pants Day is just one of a growing number of mock holidays commemorating the unlikely joys of walking around in tighty whities.

"It's a way to throw up your hands at the moorings of society in an acceptable way that's just unacceptable enough," says Karl-Thomas Musselman, a 21-year-old student at the University of Texas.

Although college kids have been taking off their pants for decades, it's only been in the past few years that slacks-doffing has gotten the holiday treatment.

By most accounts, the idea was born in the mid-'80s when a small group of students at the U of T chose to celebrate the end of the semester in their underwear. The tradition continued for roughly 15 years, with the first Friday in May marked by a mass removal of pants.

Then in 2000, the public spectacle was declared an official student holiday by the Knighthood of Buh, a campus organization dedicated to breaking social norms. Celebrations have since spread across the U.S., Sweden, Australia, Finland, the United Kingdom and even Iraq.

In Canada, pants-free festivities are known to have been held in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario.

"It's grown every year, faster than anyone intended it to," says Musselman, who has participated in No Pants Day the last two years. "We've even heard of people in their offices who have been proponents of very casual Friday, needless to say."

Just a few months ago, a similar event -- this one confined to New York -- saw 160 people ride the subway in their underwear for No Pants 2K6. The fifth annual trouser-free trip was documented with hidden cameras (www.improveeverywhere.com) and resulted in much hilarity during the morning commute.

"The real comedy is that we do it in January every year, in the middle of New York



PRESS COVERAGE

City's harsh winter," says Charlie Todd, founder of the event. "Wearing boxer shorts is really no different than wearing a bathing suit but there's something inherently more funny about it."

Even marketers are recognizing the power of going pantsless. Since 2003, the intimate apparel company FreshPair.com has declared one day each summer National Underwear Day as a means of drawing attention to unmentionables.

The August event includes outdoor "changing stations" in which a brave passersby can literally change into a fresh pair.

"I wouldn't say that it's caused the general public to start throwing their clothes off, unfortunately," says Thomas Onorato, spokesman for FreshPair.com. "But it's a really fun way for us to create awareness of our industry."

About Freshpair:

Freshpair is a leading Internet retailer of men's and women's intimate apparel, offering hundreds of styles of bras, panties, t-shirts, boxers, briefs, socks, sleepwear, and more. From full-figure to petite, shapewear to thongs, boxers to briefs, and everything in between, we are the ultimate destination for intimate apparel shopping. Freshpair.com carries many of the major brand names including 2(x)ist, C-IN2, Calvin Klein, Wacoal, Chantelle, Le Mystere, and Bali.