

LGBA

Continued From Page 1

Coming Out Day, every Oct. 11, brings attention to the issues of gays, lesbians and bisexuals who become public about their sexual orientation.

The goal of Coming Out Day is to increase the visibility of the gay, lesbian and bisexual community. The day helps show that the gay, lesbian and bisexual community crosses all ethnic, racial, geographic and economic barriers, according to the Human Rights Campaign Fund Foundation, which keeps track of Coming-Out Day events nationwide.

"It's mostly a celebration of who you are and being gay," Balzer said. "It's typically a very important fall event for gays, lesbians, bisexuals and their allies to get involved right away when school starts."

Ditton hopes that Coming Out Day on campus will be similar to the celebration in 1992 when Measure 9, similar to Measure 13, was an issue. November's state ballot Measure 13, which was written by the Oregon Citizens Alliance, will ban extension of minority rights to gays, lesbians and bisexuals if passed. He said that during election years more supporters of gay, lesbian and bisexual voice their opinions.

"Two years ago it was a great way to motivate people about ballot measures," Ditton said.

"Regardless of your sexual orientation we'll all face the same obstacles, especially with Measure 13," said Susan Anderson, co-director of the LGBA.

"People should feel a need to

TODAY'S EVENTS

■ 11 a.m. - National Coming Out Day opens with comments from the co-directors of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Alliance in the EMU Courtyard. Statements from political candidates John Kitzhaber and Peter DeFazio concerning Measure 13 and gay rights will be announced.

■ 11:30 a.m. - Liese, a local musician will be performing.

■ Noon - Kellee Weinhold, former publisher of *The Lavender Network*, a gay, lesbian and bisexual publication, will be speaking.

■ 12:20 - Erika Odessa will be presenting a drag show.

■ 1:15 - Stand-up comedy act will be performed by Julia Wallace.

■ 1:40 - Open mike.

NOTE: Events will be held inside the EMU if it rains.

EMERALD

come out in order to stand up for human rights," Ditton said.

The LGBA has been organizing Coming Out Day events since its formation in 1969. The University does not keep statistics on the percentage of the student body that is gay, lesbian or bisexual. According to Balzer, approximately 10 percent of the U.S. population is gay, lesbian or bisexual. However, according to an Oct. 7 article in *The Oregonian*, only 2.8 percent of men and 1.5 percent of women identified themselves as homosexual or bisexual.

Coming out tales emerge from interviews

Tasha Eichewseher
Oregon Daily Emerald

• Dianne Dugaw is an associate professor in the English department and open to her family, friends and students about being a lesbian.

Dugaw was raised in a small logging town by parents with conservative values, she said. "I had first-hand experience with the difficulty of dealing with the need to put a cap on things that people are afraid of," Dugaw explained.

She described her coming out in two stages. This first stage was when Dugaw admitted to herself that she was a lesbian. "Till I was almost 30 I would be attracted to women and simultaneously I was trying to be straight and have equal relationships with men, but I wasn't made that way," she said.

"I begin a sort of gradual process of coming out to people I felt safe with," Dugaw said, describing the second stage.

When Dugaw entered graduate school in the 1970s she associated more with lesbian culture. "One of the dilemmas about the closet is that I had no role models. That's why I considered it to be so impossible to be out."

The University is where she found role models. "It occurred to me that being lesbian was a way you could be," she said.

Dugaw never confronted her parents about being homosexual, but they found out anyway. "In a sense I was relieved. I don't want to know what they think as long as they treat my partner and I very well," she said.

After what Dugaw described as 20 years of suicidal self-hatred, she became comfortable with her sexuality.

"What's most positive for me is just to be what I am," Dugaw said. "The closet's not just depriving young people of role models, it's misleading people as to what history is like and what human beings are like."

• David Bell, a 30-year-old Ph.D. candidate in English literature, knew he was gay by the time he was 16 but waited to tell his family until his 27th birthday.

"I didn't tell my family because I was afraid

they wouldn't accept me," said Bell, who grew up in Cleveland.

Bell said it was easier for him to tell friends because they know less about him. In the case of his family, he said, it was more difficult because of their expectations of him.

"They hadn't ever really examined what they thought of homosexuality. For them it is a real no-no," Bell said.

"My father said to me, 'What can we do about this.' He wanted to change me. He said, 'You're such a handsome man, I don't see how you can be gay,'" Bell said. "His logic was that unsophisticated, he's intelligent but that just was what he knew about homosexuality."

Bell said his mother made biological arguments for why it was wrong to be attracted to someone of the same sex. "Her big thing was to see me as unnatural," he said.

"My parents made a special effort in telling and letting me know they still love me but they don't love my orientation," Bell said. He claims that things will never be the same with his parents but that, nonetheless, something was gained by coming out to them.

• Douglas Knecht, a senior majoring in visual design, is bisexual and believes it is harder to come out when you are sexually attracted to both sexes.

"People always think it always goes back to you being undecided, you're experimenting or it's just a phase," Knecht said.

"When I was looking for role models I couldn't identify with any because there were stereotypes for gays and lesbians but not for bisexuals," said Knecht, who grew up in what he describes as "a very conservative military Japanese family."

"Because I don't have a strong connection with my family, I told my friends first," said Knecht, who came out when he came to the University.

"When I first came out I was seeing a man. I told some really close friends and it was a relief, and at the same time it was dealing with the truth and how they would take it," he explained.

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