

Health support group growing

Recent reports from Community Health Support Services (CHSS) indicate that this new group may grow to be among the most dynamic service organizations in Portland's Gay community. Using \$2400 in organizational funds provided by Portland Gay Men's Chorus' *Our Best* concert, CHSS seeks to provide and coordinate social support services for lesbians and gay men facing terminal or life changing illnesses.

Originally dubbed Chicken Soup Brigade after a similar organization in Seattle, CHSS is now in the process of formal organization under the Phoenix Rising umbrella. A central committee has been meeting weekly since July to plan training and screening processes for prospective volunteers and clients. Subcommittees on needs assessment, volunteer coordination, training, and public relations also meet to help expedite actual services.

The group has been in close touch with gay health care groups nationwide, as well as local hospice centres and the Physician's Task Force. Four members are already participating in an intensive hospice training program

before forming a similar program to train CHSS volunteers.

By spring, the group hopes to be ready to provide emotional and practical support services to help relieve unnecessary pressures including transportation, housekeeping and shopping, while assisting clients in locating financial, legal, and medical assistance.

The group does not intend to provide direct funding and will work closely with other organizations, including Phoenix Rising and Cascade AIDS Project to assist gay men and women dealing with the anxiety, fear, alienation and isolation which often accompany serious illness.

Persons wishing more information should contact Steve Fulmer at 287-7838 or Tim at 233-5011 (eves.).

Lesbian Forum series slate

The Lesbian Forum is a once-monthly gathering of lesbians and gay-positive women to discuss topics of interest at Westminster Presbyterian Church. See calendar for details.

- The next Forum series includes:
- Jan. 15 — "Kids, mamas and partners."
 - Feb. 12 — "Balancing — Paths to self-healing" (note change from usual "3rd Tuesday" schedule)
 - March 19 — "Alternating Currents: Women Relating to Women Relating to Men."
 - April 16 — "Breaking Up."
 - May 21 — "Lesbian Business Fair."

The Forum Planning Committee meets once monthly and needs *your* input, energy and ideas. If you'd like to help on an ongoing basis or assist on one particular Forum, call Willow at 236-4386 or write to Willow/Forum, 1620 SE Ladd Ave., Portland, 97214.

Multnomah County Commissioners pass gay rights ordinance

On December 20, 1984, almost 10 years to the day after the City of Portland had done so, the Multnomah County Commission added the words *sexual orientation* to the county's civil rights ordinance. Commissioners Caroline Miller, Arnold Biskar and Richard Levy voted in favor of the charter amendment; Commissioner Gordon Shadburne voted against the change; Commissioner Earl Blumenauer was absent when the question was called, but comments he made during the hearing indicated that he was in favor of the amendment.

Commissioner Biskar, whose term ends on January 3, introduced the amendment and worked diligently for its passage. "Civil rights legislation promotes human dignity," Biskar said in his opening statement. "and minority status must be protected from majority coercion."

Approximately two dozen witnesses testified and were split about evenly for and against the ordinance. Most of those in opposition cited religion and morality as a basis for their objections.

Rabbi Emanuel Rose of Congregation Beth Israel cited distinctions between private and public morality. "There are people here today who follow lifestyles we don't all agree with," he said. "but do we judge people because of adultery or because they are divorced?"

The ordinance will become law thirty days after the date of passage.

Scene around town Gay Males Together

by Jim Hunger

If this recently passed year of grim harbingers has caused you to pause and, a la Bob Dylan, ask yourself, "Where have all the flowers gone?" you may find some of the more positive glimmers from that era still glowing at the Wednesday evening meetings

of Gay Males Together, a men's rap group which can proudly boast one of the longest histories of any gay organization in Portland. Arising, like many other social consciousness efforts, out of the altruistic liberation era of the sixties and early seventies, GMT has been a consistent community resource for over twelve years.

GMT's genesis in the early '70s, was largely the result of the energies of six men who lived together and were known as "the collective"; under their aegis the group thrived, providing a conduit for a variety of activities, such as consciousness raising, politically oriented events, and newcomer groups. Membership climbed rapidly, approaching forty to fifty members. Then, as now, the primary function of the group was to provide an outlet for discussion of topics of interest to gay men, and meetings have been held on a weekly basis in Smith Center of Portland State University since the group's inception.

Traditionally, GMT has been a relatively unstructured group, with no elected officers and no established by-laws. The purpose of the group has been to provide a friendly and informal alternative to the bar scene, and GMT has possessed the flexibility to evolve according to the perceived needs of the members at any given time. Periodically voluntary steering committees have been generated when the need for them has arisen, and members frequently accept responsibility for facilitating during discussion sessions.

In addition to weekly meetings, GMT members have engaged in a variety of activities: potlucks; parties — most recently a Halloween party; game nights; and a few picnics. A number of guests have been invited to speak before the group as well.

Newly-elected Multnomah County Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury met with members of GMT, as did several moms from Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays; men of the leather persuasion have attended meetings to present their views, as have drag queens and others.

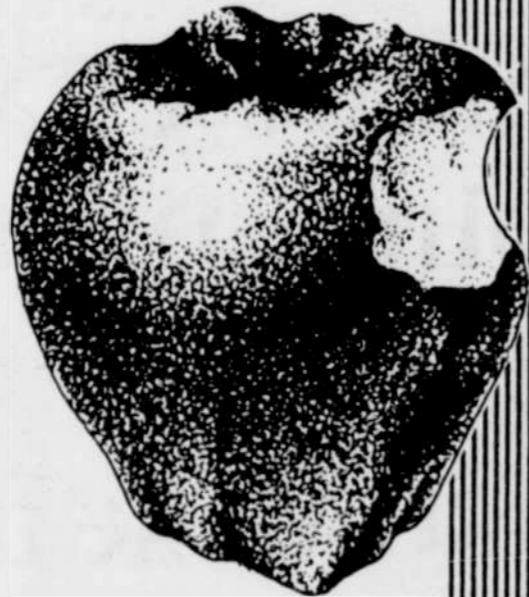
Although GMT meetings presently are attended by fewer participants than they were during the auspicious, heady period of the group's infancy in the early seventies, with numbers ranging on the average of between six and twenty, this trend has also resulted in get-togethers that continue to be relaxed and informative, but which are naturally more intimate. Discussion topics cover a variety of topics of interest to gay men; some of the recent areas of consideration have been: masturbation; spirituality; AIDS; relations between lesbians and gay men; intimate relationships; and coming out. Topics are sometimes brainstormed ahead of time and then scheduled for upcoming meetings, but as often as not they arise automatically from members' ideas and compelling concerns during the meetings. One important aspect of the association's strength is that it does provide an understanding and empathetic peer group for gay men when they feel a desire to relate experiences and feelings which could only be shared fully with gay brothers.

Gay Males Together meets every Wednesday night at 7:30 P.M. in room 229, Smith Memorial Center, Portland State University. Anyone interested in participating is welcome to come and join in the repartee.

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