

children as well as having as its main purpose providing a support system by parents of gays for parents whose children are gay. Parents/FLAG "speaks up for us" says Parfiet, who considers the group to be "god-parents" to Windfire. Ann Shepherd, founding member of Portland's Parents/FLAG and contact person for the Bridge Group, says that at each monthly meeting there is at least one new parent.

But where in all this are the young women? Jenkins admits Windfire has not been able to attract women in the same quantity as men,

separatism, not all are learning it from adult lesbians. Susan, a young woman who had been to Windfire, said that she had attended Lesbian Forum, but that it had scared her more than Windfire. She did quit going to Windfire because it "wasn't helping," and suggests that Windfire find a female co-counselor. Young men in Windfire, she says, don't have the time or patience to deal with women's issues (and most, I found, don't particularly know, after they had brought it up, what "women's issues" are: in response to my question as to what these

... in response to my question as to what these (women's issues) might be, one young man shrugged and replied, "hysterectomies? Mastectomies?"

and has not been able to keep them as members. When asked why, Jenkins cites figures from Kinsey — there simply are fewer lesbians than gay men. Both Jenkins and Parfiet hint that the "separatist" nature of the Portland lesbian community has something to do with the lack of young women's involvement in Windfire, which seems unlikely since neither is aware of any organized group in the lesbian community that is specifically working with — or "proselytizing" — young women. But if young lesbians are "learning"

might be, one young man shrugged and replied, "hyst erectomies?, mastectomies?") Susan said she hoped that their lack of understanding, time and patience was due to their age.

(Ann Shepherd tells a droll, possibly symptomatic, story of a young woman who had contacted her about Windfire. After much urging and much hesitation, the girl finally attended a Windfire meeting. Only to sit through an otherwise all-male safe sex workshop.)



Scotchie's (the other night club) is "fine for dancing" and while displaying a sign proclaiming "no overt homosexual behavior allowed" is, according to all, "full of closet cases."

ironic since kids complain that there aren't more older — 21-30 — men. "A lot of kids can't rate sexually to someone their own age.") Although both Jenkins and Swerdlow dismiss prostitution at The City as a problem, I was assured by others that "ready money" might turn a young head.

Swerdlow's goal with The City is to make kids feel that what they're doing is OK. Bar-

ring "overt heterosexual behavior" in The City gives gay kids the freedom not to conform to straight roles when they're not straight themselves. It is a place — for some perhaps the only place — to go and be gay without consequences. And The City, according to Swerdlow, is something gay kids can be proud of. The City is "as good or better than anything straight kids have."

## PLACES TO GO



And then there's The City. Started in 1983, The City Nightclub has proved to be the most successful of Lanny Swerdlow's under-age clubs (the other ventures have been Mildred's Palace and the Metropolis). Primarily a dance club, The City boasts some of the best and most recent music in town, as well as a front foyer where kids can talk. Swerdlow prefers to think of The City not as an underage club, but as an all age club, though he estimates the average age to be 21.

Swerdlow admits that he isn't running a church. "What goes on in society at large in Portland goes on in The City," Randall Parfiet considered The City to be wilder than the Family Zoo and C.C. Slaughter's put together. Not perhaps "just wilder, but different." 40% of The City's clientele is female, and, according to Swerdlow, a significant number is straight. "They come to be with their gay boy friends," offers one Windfire member. The dance floor isn't the only place of interest: there are often as many kids just sitting in the front room talking, discussing circumstances of various emotional contests as if it were half time in a peculiar sort of game.

The perhaps anticipated specter of older men preying remorselessly on innocent victims is almost never the case at The City. First of all, "older" or "adult" to many in The City merely means old enough to go to the bars, i.e., 21. And according to Jenkins "older gays have gotten a bum rap" about their exploiting younger gays. Before clubs like The City or groups like Windfire existed, where could young gays go but to adult bars to explore their sexuality, and once there, with whom else but adults? Swerdlow adds that most kids go to the City to be with friends and, for better or worse, don't want to get picked up and have their friends see it. Older men (alternatively "Chicken Hawks" or "Trolls") coming to The City looking for young game are apt not to find it since young gays are scared of being called names — "Chicken Queen," for example. (Swerdlow finds this

Teenagers have always been inventive in sacralizing places to go and be seen, and gay teenagers no less. Some of the options: For the trendy, there's hanging out with the international students at the Metro. The daring may favor Pioneer Square, while outdoor-minded males loll at the "Fruit Loop" in Washington Park. Roxy Heart's is strategically located near The City and gives access to watch the male, older foot traffic on Stark Street. And those yet to young to cruise elsewhere do so on 82nd Avenue. Scotchie's (the other night club) is "fine for dancing" and while displaying a sign proclaiming "no overt homosexual behavior allowed" is, according to all, "full of closet cases." And, at least according to some, the advent of the Windfire and Bridge groups, which facilitate gay interaction outside a bar-type milieu, are allowing the emergence of a generation of gay youth who are not bar-oriented and who find their own, less structured ways to meet and socialize.

## THINGS TO DO



But there are still problems. In general, "kids are simply ignored by the rest of the gay community," says Swerdlow. Adults don't seem to realize there's anyone under 21. Some adult organizations allow younger members, but these are then barred from

attending functions or meetings because they're held in bars. The gay community needs to establish much more outreach to gay youth.

According to another former member of Windfire, education and counseling about gay issues are still sadly lacking in high school. In his high school, there was no readily available information about gayness and he was left to explore his sexuality through textbooks and encyclopedias that labelled it — and him — as deviant.

He also feels that the gay community needs to address the situation of street kids, and all the more so in times of a health crisis. Windfire, however else it may wish to see itself, is middle class, and male. And even though The City may get kids off the street, the \$4 door charge is self-limiting. To the street kids, Windfire members and City habitués are "middle class stuck up faggots" who have "cute sex," and prostitution, to some, is "tempting, easy money."

And there needs to be increased outreach to young lesbian and bisexual women. One young woman thinks it should be a topic for Windfire and not just for the sake of the young women. One would think that the time to educate people about the realities of privilege and concerns associated with gendered identities in this society, would be while those identities are still being formed.