

LETTERS

Health Division clarifies confidentiality

To the editor:

This letter is stimulated by Carl Berggren's recent open letter to Governor Atiyeh, published in your paper several weeks ago. No recent public health issue has captured the public's attention quite like Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). There is a good deal of confusion in the public's mind regarding transmission of this disease and how one can be protected from acquiring the virus. Many *incorrectly* fear that AIDS can be acquired through casual contact, and inappropriately ostracize individuals or groups perceived, incorrectly, as being a danger to the public health.

The Oregon Health Division has instituted a two-pronged approach to deal with HTLV-III infection in Oregon. An educational program has been developed, and staff hired to provide training to medical and civic leaders throughout the State. These trained individuals will then educate citizens in the community to better understand the disease, its causes and methods of transmission.

The Division has also made HTLV-III antibody testing available through doctors and local health departments, in order to protect the state's blood supply from infection by enabling individuals who seek the test to obtain it without having to donate blood or plasma. At alternative sites, educational counseling is available for those who seek the test.

Individuals seeking the test are asked their names, as are other individuals coming to health departments for services. This allows for appropriate, and confidential medical followup of individuals who test positive for antibodies to the virus. All materials from public health records are kept confidential, and are protected by specific statutes.

The Division is in the process of creating a Task Force to consider the wider range of services needed by infected and ill individuals, and will be making proposals to the Legislature for necessary support.

I encourage any reader to seek accurate information about this infection from a local health department, or a resource such as MASS, Inc., and to share ideas about overall program development with the new Task Force, through my office.

Kristine Gebbie, Administrator
Oregon Health Division

Dear Disappointed: Try Dignity, MCC, others

To the editor:

I would like to respond to "Disappointed" who wrote to "Dear Dr. Ray" in the March 1986 edition of your paper.

You may be experiencing the loss of a community that acts from a common spiritual, moral, and ethical focus. Apparently your background carried heavy Catholic influence, based on your remarks about your family. The values taught by your church are not the primary values presented in gay bars, gay hiking groups, or gay service

organizations.

To meet people who operate from a set of values similar to your own, who can touch, understand, and respond to, your spiritual side, I suggest trying one of the religious bodies in the gay and lesbian community. Dignity is such a place, and is Catholic. Metropolitan Community Church is another such place; though not Catholic, many Catholics find meaning and spiritual feeding in our worship services. There are other groups as well.

Please feel free to call on the church or on me personally if you would like to talk more about this.

In Christ,
Rev. Gary L. Wilson, Pastor
Metropolitan Community Church of Portland

New Clear News takes no position on abortion

To the editor:

Just Out prints lies. Primary characteristics of the Right-wing include inflexibility and the willingness to lie to the public. Unfortunately, members of the progressive community recently displayed similar traits in the pages of *Just Out*. I am referring to Linda Reymers' and Billy Russo's charge that New Clear News and affiliated groups are anti-choice.

In truth, New Clear News does not take a position on abortion and its affiliates are solidly pro-choice. Here are some examples of what we've put in print: "... anti-choice legislation would result in health risks to women."

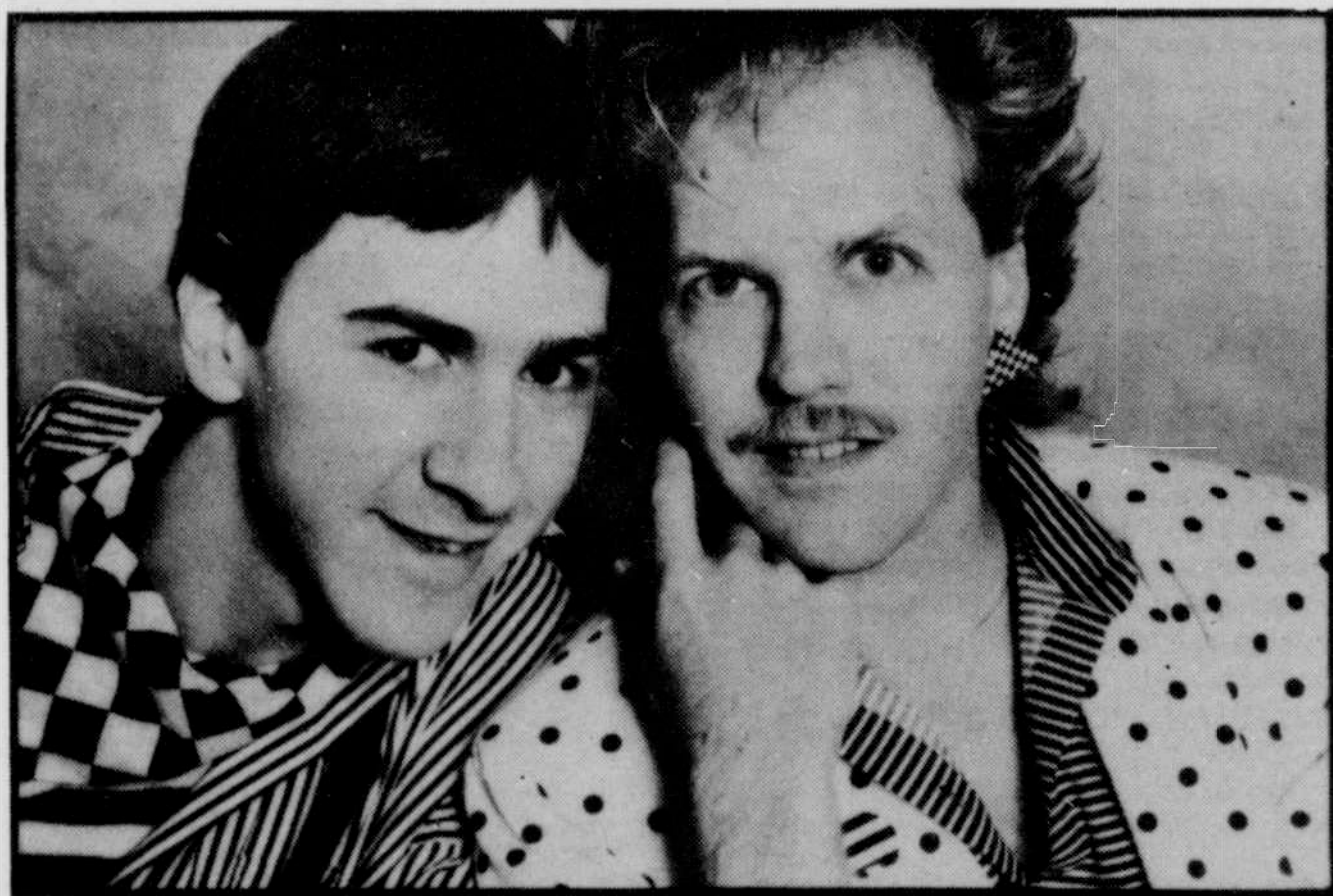
"... anti-choice legislation would make the lack of concern for the problems faced by women." "... anti-choice legislation would violate the moral directive not to judge others." We are also asking the City Council to condemn attempts to restrict reproductive freedom. The fact is we agree that abortion can be a morally defensible act, and that only the woman is in a position to make that judgement.

We are concerned about the 32,000 abortions per week in the U.S., but, as Willamette Week correctly reported, "Our primary area of concern is those abortions which occur out of economic necessity." Perhaps Linda Reymers, MRG, and others are so thoroughly pro-abortion rather than pro-choice, and so unconcerned about economic justice that they no longer qualify as progressives.

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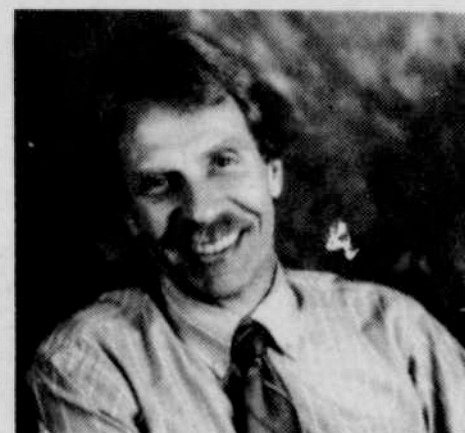
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