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just news

House of Light faces finance and licensing questions

Ability to provide care questioned

BY ROSANNE KING

This is the second article in Just Out's two-part investigation of Portland's newest and biggest residential AIDS care facility. The House of Light (HOL) officially opened June 18 surrounded by questions and controversy.

HOL's entire board of directors resigned a month before the facility opened, citing serious concerns over HOL's financial integrity and ability to provide necessary services. We began our investigation into the controversy, which immediately became a complex muddle of opinions and facts.

Throughout the investigation, though, one remarkable fact surfaced over and over. Even HOL's harshest critics still believe in a dream of a pioneer-approach, community, education, and residential care facility.

Just Out will continue to follow the story of the House of Light and will investigate and report new developments.

though several finance professionals were board members. HOL Program Director Bonnie Johnson said the budget which provoked the mass resignation was simply "a scenario Jeri had written up."

A new budget has been drafted and is now the concern of the new board of directors, one of whom has already resigned. According to Hendricks and Johnson, the facility's financial condition is dramatically different from the one described by the former board.

According to the minutes of the May 17 board meeting, HOL's total indebtedness was \$150,982.80 as of April 15. Hendricks and Johnson put the figure at \$85,000. That figure includes \$14,000 in unpaid payroll and related taxes. Johnson declined comment on the \$65,982.80 difference in figures.

HOL still has its lease/buy agreement for the facility with the Sisters of the Good Shepard. The agreement, made in late 1988, "is not public knowledge," according to Donn M. Sullivan, real estate agent for the Sisters.



House of Light's front entry off Dekum Street in north Portland.

PHOTO BY JEFFIE SLAUGHTER

A visit to the House of Light Residential Care Facility (HOL) makes one thing clear. Great love, commitment and effort, from many people, have made the care center possible.

It is not apparent, however, that patrons of the new facility are facing significant obstacles to fulfilling their dream of a financially solvent community care center.

The status of HOL's finances remain unclear at best. HOL's entire board of directors resigned at their May 17 meeting, citing "irreconcilable differences" between the board and HOL Director Jeri I. Hendricks. Minutes of that meeting detail serious concerns over the center's funding prospects and ability to provide adequate care.

Hendricks discounts the former board's concerns. She said she believes the board was uncomfortable with "scary dollars," even

"It's exactly the same as in 1988," he said. "We just moved the dates. There's nothing wrong with that."

He described the facility as "an excellent endeavor" and verified that all personal property left by the Sisters were part of the lease/buy agreement.

Hendricks asserts that the personal property donated by the Sisters give HOL a \$500,000 inventory, including cases of handmade soap and several pieces of antique furniture. The center has eight pianos, including two Baby Grands.

Other donations have furnished the 15-bed facility with 65 hospital beds—30 of them from Good Samaritan Hospital. St. Vincent's Hospital donated 75 televisions.

Hendricks intends to convert the entire inventory to cash when terms of the lease/buy agreement are satisfied. "When we close," she