

Fight the OCA

Two groups have organized in Oregon to work against the initiative

by Inga Sorensen

Human rights supporters are developing two distinct campaigns designed to defeat the Oregon Citizens Alliance's anti-gay ballot initiative which deems homosexuality "perverse and abnormal." The No On Hate and Oregonians for Human Dignity campaigns strive to defeat the proposed state constitutional amendment by employing the skills and passions of a diverse array of individuals and organizations. While the goal of the campaigns is similar, their structures and processes are shaping up differently.

No On Hate—This campaign has been described as a largely grassroots effort, open to anyone wanting to become involved. Community-wide meetings are held regularly throughout Portland, and participants range from the political novice to lifelong human rights activists. All are volunteers.

"The beauty of this campaign is that everyone is welcome. From the lipstick lesbian to the motorcycle dyke, there's a place for everyone," explains Donna Red Wing, executive director of the Lesbian Community Project.

She adds, "This is truly grassroots. We're teaching each other about our history. We're teaching each other how to work together, and how to use the tools that will empower our community. What's also nice is that we're seeing new leadership emerge. People you may not have known are emerging as new voices for our community."

No On Hate began its work this past summer, and recently issued its mission statement which describes the group as a "diverse, grassroots campaign and coalition of organizations dedicated to fighting and defeating the Oregon Citizens Alliance's hate initiative." The campaign structure is essentially lateral, comprised of several committees; Media, Visibility, AIDS, Speaker's Bureau, Finance, Unified Voice, SM/Leather, Volunteer Coordination and a Coordinating Committee. Volunteers work on the committee of their choice, and tasks include conducting historical, legal and other relevant research, teaching public presentation skills, creating and maintaining media relations, coordinating events designed to promote lesbian and gay visibility, and securing and educating volunteers. Committees meet, conduct their research and work, and then bring their ideas and proposals back to the entire group to be discussed and ultimately voted upon.

"We've also been working on our structure and process," explains Alanna Hein, a Coordinating Committee member. "We now have an agenda which we follow at every meeting. That agenda includes sharing information about what the statewide campaign is up to, an OCA update, committee reports, and a discussion of old and new business."

Meetings are co-facilitated, and participants are asked to abide by a series of rules including listening and respecting others. No On Hate meetings have, at times, been described as volatile, unproductive, slow-moving and "too bogged down in the process." Hein, however, defends the process saying, "In new organizations the process of self-defining is a process itself. We believe a process that allows for all sides to be heard is ultimately the best and strongest."

On average about 60 people, the majority lesbian and gay, attend the meetings. Hein would like to see that number grow and diversify, and encourages others to become involved.

The campaign is also seeking status as a political action committee. If its PAC applications are approved by city and state officials, No On Hate will be able to raise funds and advocate in a partisan manner against the OCA's initiative. The campaign would then evolve as a two-pronged

entity, one facet handling public education, the other taking care of PAC activities.

Those wanting to become involved in No On Hate can write to No On Hate/Portland Metro, PO Box 2725, Portland, Ore. 97208-2725, or call (503) 230-9430.

Oregonians for Human Dignity—This newly-named entity is frequently referred to as the statewide anti-OCA campaign. It grew out of a series of large, statewide community meetings. It has been described as a more broad-based, "mainstream media" effort whose structure is specifically designed to encourage coalition-building among gays and non-gays, and members of religious, civic, business and progressive communities.

"There's much to be appreciated from both campaigns," says longtime activist Cathy Siemens, an OHD Steering Committee member. "I think, however, this effort will most likely reach the greatest number of people, both heterosexual and gay, statewide...This is going to be more of a mainstream media campaign."

Sherry Oeser, Steering Committee chair, describes the campaign structure as five-pronged. It includes a Steering Committee, Coalition Council, Regional Council, Leadership Council, and Grassroots Network. The Steering Committee members were primarily elected by the Interim Planning Group. That group met during the summer and included lesbians, gays, and non-gays from a host of backgrounds and organizations statewide. The Interim Planning Group subsequently dissolved after the permanent campaign's Steering Committee was elected. Committee members include representatives who have solid links to Oregon's religious, business, political, progressive, grassroots, and gay and lesbian populations. It also includes a liaison between the OHD and No On Hate campaigns. Activist Carol Steinel will act as that liaison to help ensure adequate communication and cooperation between the two campaigns.

The group's mission statement has yet to be drafted, says Oeser, adding the goal of the campaign is firstly to keep the OCA's initiative from getting on the ballot. If it does get on the ballot, the goal is to defeat it.

The campaign structure also includes a Coalition Council, whose membership has not yet been determined. Oeser says the council could include representatives from organizations that have already publicly denounced the OCA's initiative. Council members will be selected by the Steering Committee, and its members could ultimately work to educate the public and raise funds for the campaign. Similarly, a Leadership Council will be formed. Oeser says it will be comprised of people who have "statewide exposure, name recognition, access to resources, and credibility." It may include political figures, and those who are "trusted in their fields." Leadership Council members would also work towards public education and securing resources for the campaign.

A Regional Council will be formed to help organizing efforts statewide. It will include all interested parties from all regions. A member of the Regional Council will sit on the Steering Committee. A Grassroots Network, involving any interested individuals or grassroots organizations throughout Oregon, will also be developed. Staff, including a campaign manager, will be hired to help coordinate the Grassroots Network, and run the overall campaign.

Oeser says decisions about strategy and staffing have not been made because the Steering Committee has thus far been working on the campaign structure. She says, however, the campaign is open to anyone wanting to get involved. Interested parties can write to Oregonians for Human Dignity, PO Box 3343, Portland, Ore., 97208, or call (503) 245-5351.

CIRCLE HEALTHCARE CLINIC

ACUPUNCTURE • CHIROPRACTIC • MASSAGE
COUNSELING • NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

JAN CORWIN, D.C.
CHIROPRACTIC PHYSICIAN

KIP M. HARD, D.C.
CHIROPRACTIC PHYSICIAN

SUZANNE SCOPES, N.D.
NATUROPATHIC PHYSICIAN

BROOKE WINTER, L.Ac.
ACUPUNCTURIST

VALERIE M. LYON, M.S., L.M.T.
MASSAGE & BODY CENTERED THERAPY

ELIZABETH CARLSON D.C., L.M.T.
CHIROPRACTIC PHYSICIAN

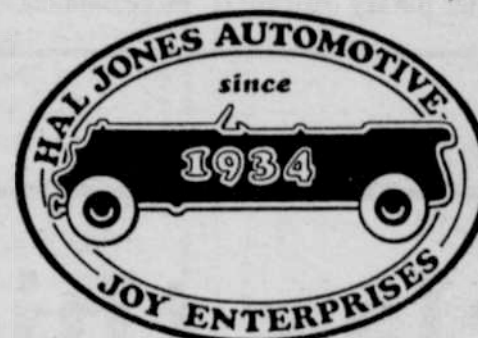
316 N.E. 28TH ST., PORTLAND, OR 97232
(503) 230-0812

HAL JONES AUTOMOTIVE

JOY ENTERPRISES

Bill Joy
Bill Joy

Ron Joy
Ron Joy



5111 NE Fremont
Portland, OR 97213

288-1130

You'll know it when you see it.

Like love at first sight,
you'll know your new
home when you see it.

My job as a professional
Realtor is to make the
process of finding your
home as easy as possible.
You'll have my support
from start to finish,
through the search,
financing, and escrow.
I'll listen to your dreams
and your needs and put
my knowledge, experience
and resources to work.

Then comes the fun
part. Like sinking into a
comfortable chair, you'll
know the one for you by
how good it feels.

Call me. I'll help you
find your way home.



Cathy Siemens

Bridgetown Realty
(503) 287-9370
(503) 238-0135 (home)



Bridgetown Realty