

Fierstein to speak at fund-raising dinner

Tony award winner Harvey Fierstein, who wrote and directed "Torch Song Trilogy," will be appearing in Portland later this month at a major fund-raiser for the Human Rights Campaign Fund. The HRCF is the largest national political organization committed to securing full civil rights for lesbians and gay men.

"Our national headquarters in Washington, D.C., approached Harvey and told him what was happening here in Oregon," explains Ron Meier, a member of the HRCF's Portland chapter. "He said he wants to help our efforts to defeat the OCA however possible." Fierstein will be the keynote speaker for the March 28 fund-raiser titled "Knockout." It will mark the Portland chapter's first major fund-raising effort. More than 500 guests are expected to attend the dinner and casino/cabaret at Montgomery Park. Portland entertainer Darcelle will be featured. U.S. Rep. Les AuCoin, state Rep. Gail Shibley and Portland Police Chief Tom Potter will be acknowledged for their contributions to Oregon's gay and lesbian community.

The money raised will be used to fund political candidates throughout the nation who support lesbian and gay civil rights. The money will also be used to help fund the HRCF's lobbying efforts. The group has formed an extensive constituent network that can be mobilized quickly when lawmakers are considering key legislation pertaining to gay men's and lesbians' civil rights.

"The money we raise will go to our national headquarters and will be used for a series of HRCF activities," explains Meier. "It won't directly go to our fight here against the OCA... but it's really important we realize that the HRCF supports national candidates who, if elected, could enact legislation granting us civil rights. They lobby on our behalf. They work on AIDS and other health issues and have fought to overturn the military ban against gays. The work they do may help to deter OCA-type groups in a broader sense. It's really important we consider that."

Meier adds that the organization recently awarded the Campaign for a Hate Free Oregon a \$1,500 matching gift for its efforts to defeat the OCA. "They don't typically do such a thing," he says. "This proves they're concerned about the OCA and are willing to combat them directly."

For "Knockout" ticket information call (503) 452-5885.

Inga Sorensen



Harvey Fierstein

Union has lots to be proud of

Domestic partnership issues and gay civil rights topped the agenda at a recent gathering of the advisory council representing gay and lesbian public employees who are members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. This is the nation's second-largest union. Portlander Mark Friedman, a parking patrol deputy for the city of Portland and member of AFSCME local 189, was named to the 12-member committee. He recently traveled to the nation's capitol to discuss the concerns of lesbian and gay union members.

"AFSCME has it written into its International Constitution that lesbians and gays cannot be discriminated against and that we must receive the same representation and treatment as other members," says Friedman. "The union has been very open to hearing the concerns of lesbians and gays. This committee, which communicates directly with the president of the union, was formed to ensure our needs were addressed."

According to Friedman, this is the third time the committee has met since its formation a couple of years ago. He says the council is launching a visibility campaign to let union members know that the committee exists, better serving the gay and lesbian union members.

"We discussed things like the union's role in

lobbying for federal lesbian and gay civil rights, which it supports. We talked about how to negotiate for domestic partnership privileges in contracts," he says. "A main goal now, however, is to let our members know we're here for them," he says.

Friedman says he's very proud of his union. Local 189 was able to include an antidiscrimination clause, including sexual orientation, prior to the Portland City Council's passage of a civil rights ordinance banning such discrimination. He says AFSCME has also contributed to the Victory Fund, a political action committee which supports gay and lesbian candidates nationwide.

"We have a lot to be proud of, but I hope we can make it even better for lesbians and gays," he says.

Inga Sorensen

Salem community unites to create a hate-free Oregon

Salem area residents gathered to organize a local chapter of the Campaign for a Hate Free Oregon, educating fellow citizens against bigotry and hatred. Over 100 people, representing much of the Salem community, attended Jan. 26.

The prime motivation for forming the group is to stop the Oregon Citizens Alliance's (OCA) initiative petition effort. This statewide initiative would amend the Oregon constitution to prohibit any equal protection based on sexual preference.

"It is important to note that this is not a group of gay or lesbian activists, but a broad-based group of many individuals who want to make Oregon hate-free," said Steve Armstrong, who was encouraged by the fact that support was strong among heterosexuals as well as homosexuals. "I was impressed that we had so many people at this meeting. We expected 50 to 60 and ended up with over a hundred," said Phil Matthews, co-chair of the Salem group.

Supporters of the Campaign for a Hate Free Oregon include a number of religious groups, including Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, the Jewish Federation of Portland, and the Metropolitan Community Church. The Oregon Catholic Bishops have spoken out against the OCA's petition effort as well.

"The primary goal is to defeat the OCA and let the public know they don't need to be afraid of homosexuals," said a concerned Dan Archer.

The group meets every other Sunday at 7 pm at the Upper Deck Restaurant at 300 Liberty Street SE in Salem's Pringle Park Plaza. For

further information about the Campaign for a Hate Free Oregon, contact the state headquarters at PO Box 3343, Portland, OR 97208.

Enhancing the lives of oppressed peoples

The McKenzie River Gathering Foundation has approved \$55,000 in grants to a host of grassroots organizations throughout Oregon. The Lesbian Community Project received \$2,200 for improving the organization's accessibility to women of color, older women, younger women, and women with disabilities. The Coalition for Human Dignity was granted \$2,500 for a project aimed at exposing gender-based bigotry and violence against women. The Oregon Minority AIDS Coalition, which provides culturally appropriate AIDS education to Oregon's ethnic communities, received \$2,300 for its outreach project to HIV positive women.

Several organizations received \$2,500 grants. They include the Oregon Human Rights Coalition; Sacred Earth Coalition; Sojourner Truth Theater; and Tatyah Topa. These organizations are designed to enhance the lives of oppressed people.

McKenzie River Gathering is a community foundation that receives financial contributions from donors throughout the state. The donors share MRG's commitment to building a more "just, equitable and environmentally sound" community. The grantmaking decisions are made by a statewide committee of 14 volunteers who are active in the issues that MRG funds.

Inga Sorensen

Another defeat for the OCA

The Oregon Citizens Alliance has no candidate to oppose Sen. Bob Packwood in the Republican primary.

Perry Atkinson, a Christian broadcaster from Medford, was the last hope for the OCA. He backed out of the running late in February.

"At this particular moment it doesn't look very promising" that the OCA will have a candidate it can back, according to Lon Mabon, executive director of the group. "We had nobody else besides Perry we were trying to communicate with."

The OCA has been looking for another candidate since Joe Lutz dropped out of the race last month.

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