

City of Portland adds domestic partner health care coverage

Gay men, lesbians and unmarried heterosexuals who work for the city of Portland will be able to extend their health care coverage to their partners, city officials decided last week. Members of the Portland City Council voted June 8 on a new contract for city workers that offers health benefits to unmarried domestic partners, regardless of their sexual orientation.

The vote was part of negotiated labor agreements with two of seven union groups, and similar agreements with the other five employee bargaining units are expected within the next two months. Gail Johnson, employee relations manager for the city, said that similar provisions will be provided by the City Council for nonunion employees.

The new contracts mark the first time that unmarried domestic partners of city employees have been eligible for medical, dental, vision and life insurance benefits. Multnomah County approved a similar benefit plan in 1992, and the city of Seattle started such coverage in 1991.

To qualify under the Portland plan, domestic partners must have lived together for at least one year, must not be married to anyone, must be responsible for each others' welfare and must have a close, personal relationship.

"We have broadened the definition of family," said City Commissioner Mike Lindberg. "This is actually pro-family. We should be doing everything we can to support families and keep them together."

Portland man wins \$10,000 in race-relations case

In a recent final order, Labor Commissioner Mary Wendy Roberts ruled that the management of Northwest Fitness and Supply discriminated against an African American employee. The man, Marquis M. McNeil, said the company's managers discriminated against him, and finally fired him, because of his race. Roberts upheld McNeil's complaints of discrimination, but found he was fired for reasons unrelated to race. The commissioner ordered Northwest Fitness and Supply to pay McNeil \$10,000 in damages for mental and emotional distress.

Testimony in the case showed that a racially biased atmosphere existed at the Sandy Boulevard store, fostered by suggestions from managers that African Americans were shoplifters, the manager's refusal to hire more African American employees, and their refusal to place ads in *The Skanner*, a local African American newspaper. In her opinion, Roberts wrote that McNeil endured frequent and repeated suggestions that people of his race were untrustworthy.

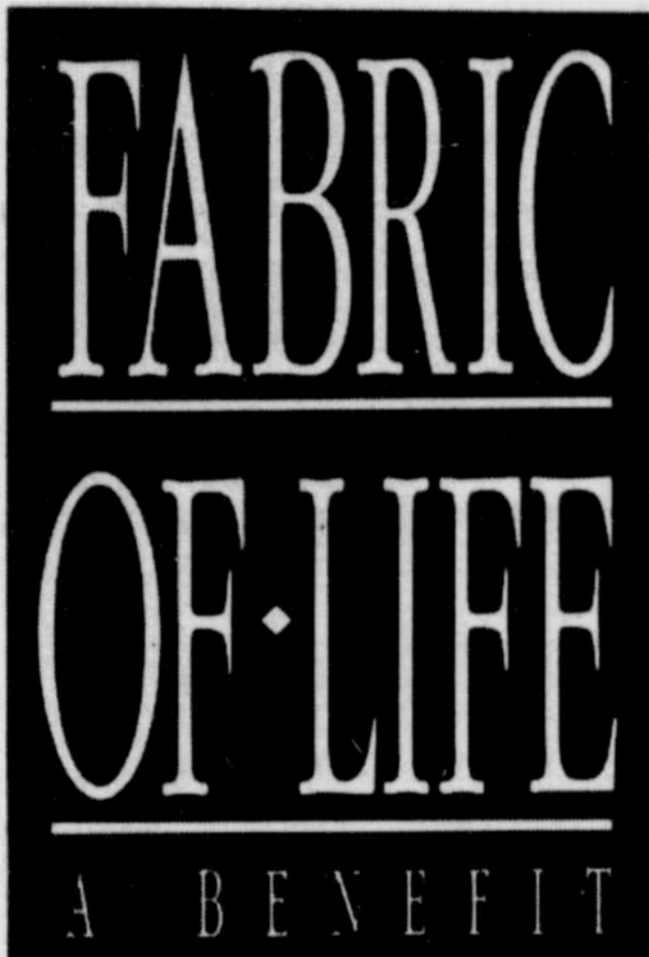
Northwest Fitness and Supply has until July 26 to appeal the decision.

Local AIDS group gets \$75,000 grant

The Research and Education Group, a community-based public research consortium, has received \$75,000 from the American Foundation for AIDS Research and the Kresge Foundation. The money will be used to expand the local organization's communication and data management capabilities. The Research and Education Group, originally founded as The Oregon AIDS

Task Force, has evolved over 10 years to its current role as the largest community-based research program in the northwestern United States.

The Research and Education Group was one of 21 community-based AIDS research centers around the country to receive funding as part of a \$1.3 million grant program designed by the two foundations. The American Foundation for AIDS Research is the nation's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to funding AIDS-related research, prevention and public policy.



Fabric of Life benefit set

Oregon's most significant fund-raising event to benefit people with AIDS is set for June 23 at Saks Fifth Avenue. The evening will include an opportunity to see the work of Portland's best interior designers, enjoy a delightful variety of musical entertainment and a fashion show, and sample outstanding food and wine.

The event, "Fabric of Life," will benefit the Brinker Fund, the HIV Day Center, Our House of Portland, Esther's Pantry, Friends of People with AIDS and the Catholic Charities AIDS Ministry. All of these organizations offer help and support to people living with AIDS and HIV.

Hosted by Paul Linnman, the event will include festivities both inside and outside the store. Inside, patrons will enjoy performances by local jazz musician Michael Harrison and the Tapestry String Quartet. A silent auction will feature collectibles and designer furniture, and participants will have a chance to see works in progress by local designers.

Tickets are \$125 for Gold Patrons and \$75 for patrons. The event runs from 7 pm to 10 pm at Saks, 850 SW Fifth Ave. More information is available by calling Saks at 226-3200.

Scholarships available

The Pride of the Rose Scholarship Fund has applications available in June and July for the 1994-95 school year. Now in its 15th year, the Pride of the Rose Scholarship Fund has donated more than \$30,000 to 32 gay men, lesbians and children of gay men and lesbians. Applications are available through the Equity Foundation, PO Box 5696, Portland, OR 97228. A fund-raising event for the scholarship fund is set for Monday, June 20, at La Luna.

Compiled by Martha Allen

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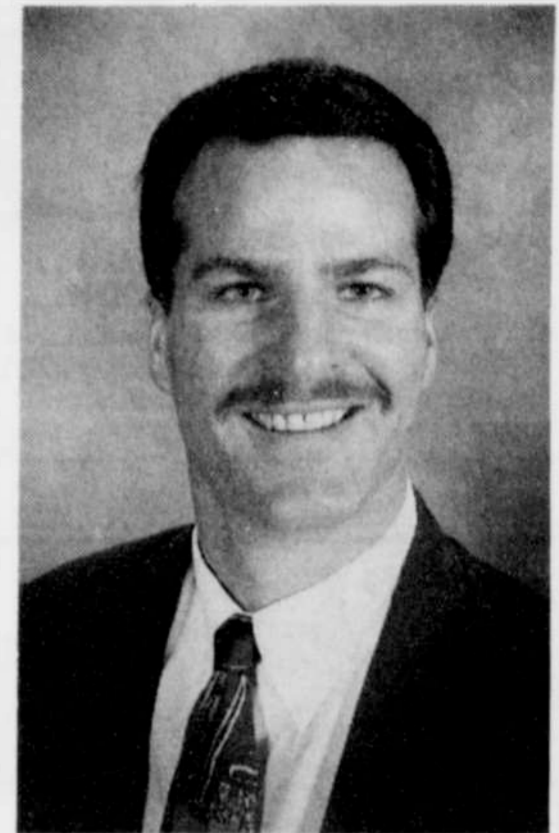
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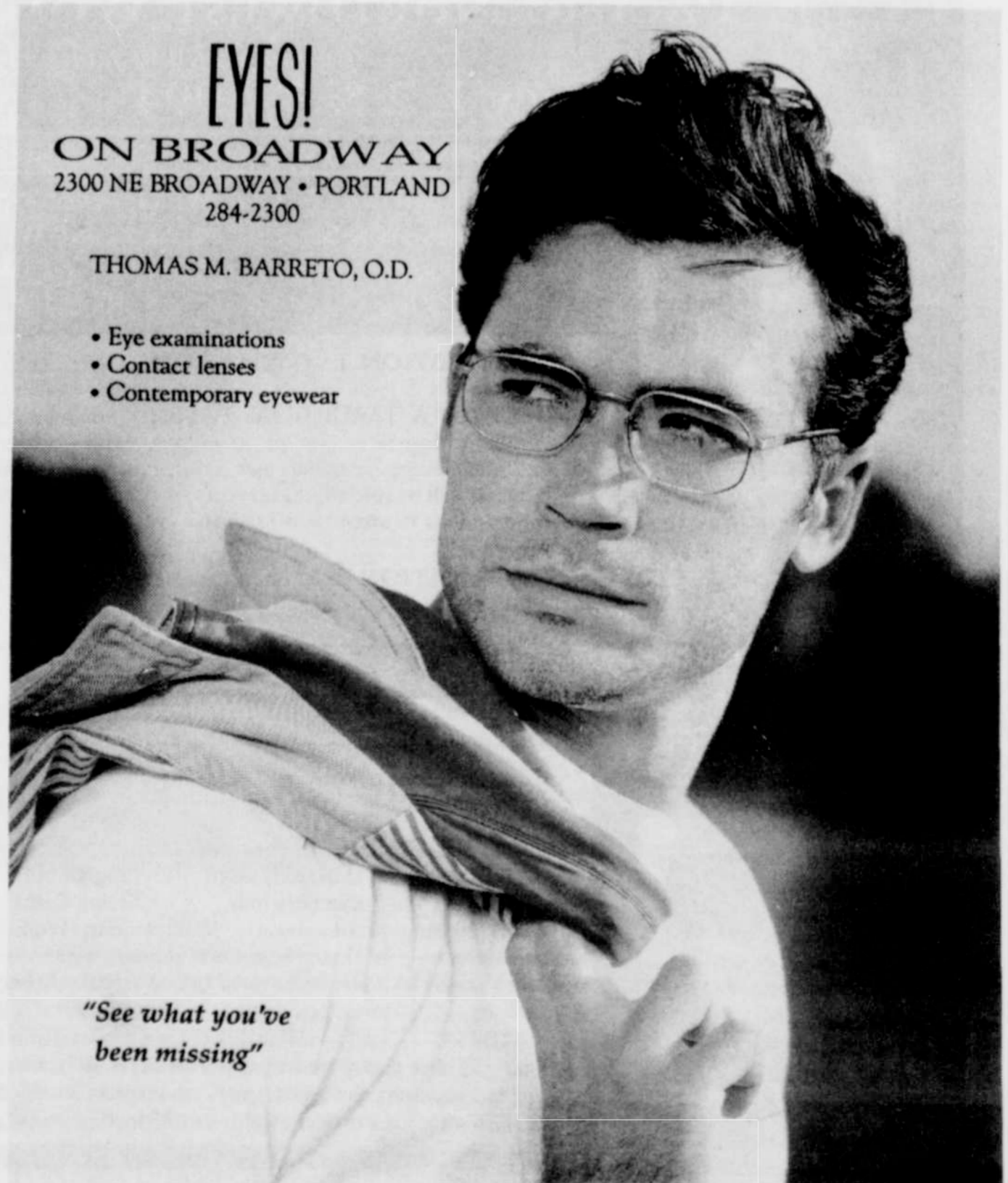
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