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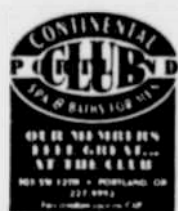
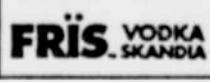
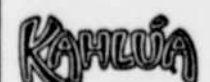
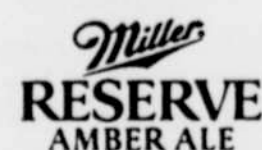
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## local news

### Out in the cold?

A local agency can help Portlanders with bias-based  
rental or eviction problems

by Inga Sorensen

Are gay men and lesbians throughout  
Portland being denied housing due to  
their sexual orientation? Maybe, at  
least according to an organization that  
fields housing discrimination claims.

"We've had several people call to say they  
thought they had been evicted or denied a renting  
opportunity because of their sexual orientation,"  
says Pam Slaughter, a fair housing specialist for  
the Portland Housing Center, a private, nonprofit  
organization that provides a host of housing-  
related services. "In most of these cases these  
people are gay or lesbian, but a few were simply  
perceived to be gay."

Under a pilot program approved last year by the  
Portland City Council, the Portland Housing Center  
became the starting point for discrimination com-  
plaints in Multnomah County. According to Slaugh-  
ter, the center receives the initial calls from people  
who think they may have been discriminated against,  
and then refers the cases to Multnomah County  
Legal Aid.

"A typical case may in-  
volve two women who show  
up together to take a look at  
a rental apartment. The land-  
lord assumes they are lesbi-  
ans and chooses to rent to  
someone else," she says.

"We had one case where a young man had already  
moved into an apartment. The landlady seemed to  
love him at first. Two weeks after he moved  
in, she commented on how sparse his apartment  
was and wanted to know when he was going to get  
some more furniture. He told her he was planning  
to do that when his boyfriend moved up from San  
Francisco. Two days later the man received a 'no  
cause' eviction notice."

According to Slaughter, landlords can issue  
30-day "with cause" eviction notices which cite  
the reasons for evicting a tenant, or "no cause"  
notices, in which the landlord is not required to  
cite the cause. She says during the past year she  
has filed 50 claims of housing discrimination  
based on familial status (for example, parents  
claim landlords won't rent to them because they  
have children); about 40 race-based claims; and  
15 sexual orientation claims.

State and federal laws ban housing discrimina-  
tion on the basis of race, sex, age, national origin,  
marital status and religion. A Portland city ordi-  
nance also bans discrimination on the basis of

sexual orientation, source of income and age.

After handling the intake calls, the Portland  
Housing Center passes the cases on to Legal Aid,  
which works with state and federal agencies to  
track and investigate housing discrimination claims  
involving protected groups in Multnomah County.  
The Housing Center, which serves low- to moder-  
ate-income citizens, can only handle sexual orien-  
tation cases involving Portland residents because it  
is the only locality within Multnomah County to  
legally bar housing discrimination based on sexual  
orientation.

"I've dealt with a handful of [sexual orienta-  
tion-based] cases," says Hannah Callaghan, super-  
visor of Multnomah County Legal Aid's housing  
unit. "There were more cases, but because these  
folks didn't live in Portland, they were not a  
protected class. Basically there was nothing we  
could do."

According to Callaghan, most of the Portland  
cases have been resolved. "Many of those cases

involved a landlord send-  
ing the tenant an eviction  
notice. In most of these  
cases after intervention  
from either ourselves or  
BOLI [the state Bureau of  
Labor and Industries, which  
has contracted with the city

*If you are gay and you  
don't live in a place that  
has approved housing  
protections, you're  
basically stuck.*

to investigate sexual orientation discrimination  
claims], the landlord has withdrawn the eviction  
notice."

Legal Aid also works with the U.S. Department  
of Housing and Urban Development, a federal  
agency that investigates housing discrimination  
claims. Because there are no federal protections  
based on sexual orientation, HUD will not handle  
discrimination claims based on sexual orientation.

Callaghan says, "I would imagine this is a  
bigger problem than the numbers would indicate.  
For one, a lot of people aren't sure where to go  
when they think they've been discriminated against.  
Secondly, unless a landlord says something blat-  
tant, it's really difficult to test for sexual orien-  
tation discrimination. And, of course, if you are gay  
and you don't live in a place that has approved  
housing protections, you're basically stuck. You  
can be discriminated against and there's nothing  
you can do."

If you think you may have been discriminated  
against in housing, contact the Portland Housing  
Center at (503) 282-7744.

### Coastal mayor proclaims "I'm no racist"

Lincoln City's mayor says he hopes assertions  
that he is a racist will finally be put to rest following  
the recent passage of a city council resolution  
condemning intolerance and discrimination.

"I'm no racist. Things just got blown out of  
shape, that's all," says 73-year-old Sam Cribbs,  
who has been Lincoln City's mayor for the past six  
years.

Cribbs came under fire in August after he made  
what many feel was a racist remark while on a local  
radio talk show. Cribbs, who had previously been  
involved in a recall effort of four city councilors  
after they voted to cut the city attorney's budget—  
a move Cribbs opposed—says he simply became  
angry at a particular caller. Two days before, the  
caller, Jack Byrnes, had a letter published in the  
local newspaper criticizing the mayor and the  
recall effort.

Byrnes reportedly called in to the radio talk  
program and challenged Cribbs to hold more town  
meetings. At that point, Cribbs says he became  
agitated and remarked, "Let's get to a white man."

"I guess I should have just called him a son of  
a bitch instead," Cribbs reflects. "I had a slip of the  
tongue. That happens to everybody."

"It was just incredible," says Lincoln City  
resident Jim Boyer. "I understand that he's part of  
the good ol' boys network and has been involved  
in small-town politics for 30 years, but that's no  
excuse for that type of remark."

Oct. 10, the Lincoln City Council approved a  
resolution denouncing bigotry, which Cribbs says  
he "totally supports."

For his part, Boyer says he wants city officials  
to do more than simply pass a resolution. "How  
about we strive for real change?" he says. "I'd like  
to see a city-sponsored multicultural festival or  
something along those lines. A resolution is a first  
step, but it really doesn't do much."

Inga Sorensen