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local news

Hopper enjoys challenges

Jimmy Hopper says it's great to be able to help others the way he has been helped.

Hopper is the executive director of the Douglas County AIDS Council, which runs the Roseburg-based Ruby House, a home serving people with HIV/AIDS. Hopper's history with Ruby House is long and varied: In 1988, when Ruby House first opened, Hopper was its first border. He soon became a volunteer, then an administrative assistant, and last July he took charge of running the home's day-to-day operations.

"This is everything I thought it would be and more," says the 30-year-old Hopper. "Sure, I got to make decisions when I was administrative assistant, but it's a lot different when you're executive director. The buck stops with you."

According to Hopper, Ruby House currently serves about 50 clients, the majority of whom are intravenous drug users and their sexual partners.

During its early days, the project primarily served gay men living with HIV/AIDS, but the clientele demographic has begun to shift. There have been other changes over the years as well. When Ruby House first opened, it was located in Winston, but the project later moved to a large modern house in the Newton Creek area with the assistance of Mercy Health Care.

Ruby House's founder, Billy Russo, who remains the project's manager, started the home with \$6,000 of his own money—today the home's annual budget is more than \$100,000.

"Some things have changed, but our goal hasn't," says Hopper. "That goal of course, is to meet the needs of our clients as best we can."

Hopper is currently working on a proposal to obtain Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act Title II funds. Those federal dollars support, among other things, home- and community-based care services. He is also orchestrating the organization's primary fundraiser, AIDS Walk Roseburg Oregon, which last year raised about \$3,000. Hopper hopes this year's event, slated for May 6, will pull in as much as \$5,000. He says about 150 people are participating—double the amount that joined in last year, which was the first time the walk was held.

"We encourage everybody to come out for this. They can even come and sign up the day of the event. It's a great cause," he says.

The 6-mile walk begins at Roseburg High School. Registration will be held from noon until 1 pm at the school's vocational building; the walk begins at 1 pm. For more information, call Hopper at 440-2761.

Scholarship fund for aspiring attorneys

"A Class Act," a spring concert to benefit the Bill and Ann Shepherd Legal Scholarship Fund, will take place April 21 at The Old Church, 1422 SW 11th Ave. in Portland. The event will feature pianist Thomas Lauderdale and soprano/organist Jennifer Shepherd.

The scholarship, which will be administered by Equity Foundation, will aid third-year law students who are dedicated to practicing human-rights law in Oregon.

It is named after Bill and Ann Shepherd, who have been active in Oregon's gay and lesbian community since the mid-1970s when their daughter, Susie, came out as a lesbian. The couple co-founded the state chapter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays; testified on behalf of gay rights legislation; and marched in many gay and lesbian pride parades. They received Right To Privacy's Lucille Hart Award in 1985. Bill Shepherd, who died last month at age 81, practiced law in Portland for many years. He was willing to write wills and perform other legal services for sexual minority couples during a time when few attorneys would make themselves available.



Thomas Lauderdale performs at scholarship fund benefit

Doors open at 6:40 pm; the concert begins at 7 pm. Tickets, which are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door, are available at Balloons on Broadway, It's My Pleasure and Jelly Bean. For more information, call 244-3225.

Oregon rolls out the red carpet for HRCF

"Roll Out the Red Carpet," an Oregon fundraiser for the Human Rights Campaign Fund, a national gay and lesbian rights organization, will be held April 29 at Portland's World Trade Center outdoor atrium. Tickets for the event are \$125.

The keynote speaker will be HRCF Executive Director Elizabeth Birch, the former chief litigator for Apple Computer Inc.; comedian Georgia Ragsdale will be the master of ceremonies. Oregon U.S. Rep. Elizabeth Furse and Basic Rights Oregon Executive Director Julie Davis will receive awards for their work on behalf of gay and lesbian rights. Gov. John Kitzhaber is also scheduled to speak. Organizers say Greg Louganis, the U.S. Olympic diving champ who recently disclosed that he has AIDS, may make an appearance as well.

HRCF is an 80,000-member organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. It fights discrimination against gay men and lesbians through organizing, lobbying and financial support for political candidates. Cocktails begin at 6 pm; dinner is at 8 pm. For ticket information, call 241-7921.