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local news

Time for a sequel

*Police urge citizen involvement to stop gay-bashing:
Will the Pink Panthers return?*

by Inga Sorensen

Portland police are encouraging citizens to get involved in efforts to make neighborhoods that are known as particular trouble spots safer. One such zone is the Southwest Stark Street area between 10th and 13th avenues, home to several establishments that cater to a gay clientele.

"We think it's really important that the gay and lesbian community get involved in the effort to stop gay bashing and crime in that area," says Portland police spokesman Lt. C.W. Jensen. "I don't believe the Portland Police Bureau has ever had more of a police presence in that neighborhood than we do now. We have regular foot and horse patrols. Car patrols can be spotted there all the time. But the fact is, people who hate are going to target that area. We have to work together to stop it—that's what community policing is all about."

Throughout the years, Southwest Stark Street has been the site of altercations and violence prompted by people—often young males—who specifically come to the district to harass people perceived as gay or lesbian.

One very brutal attack on a gay couple was highlighted in a Sept. 7 *Oregonian* article. Reporter Tom Hallman Jr. wrote about the savage beating of Northeast Portland residents Carl Riege and his partner, Richard McGary. The two were reportedly attacked by three men at about 11:30 pm on Aug. 25 after leaving a downtown gay nightclub. So bad was the assault on Riege that he

lost an eye.

"This was a terrible attack, but I wonder why these men didn't report it to the police. I know that sexual minorities have justifiable concerns about coming forward, but if you are harassed or assaulted you need to tell us about it so we can double our efforts or at the very least inform the community," says Jensen, who investigated bias crimes against sexual minorities during the volatile Ballot Measure 9 campaign three years ago.

According to Jensen, reported bias crimes against sexual minorities are down. He says 66 such crimes were reported for all of 1994. Through the end of June 1995, there were 19 reported incidents, compared to "more than 30" for the same period last year.

"Reports of bias incidents based on sexual orientation have just crashed. I know that underreporting occurs, but incidents appear to be down," says Jensen, who encourages gay men and lesbians to

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form patrols—much like the Pink Panther groups that popped up across the country a few years ago. Those citizens' patrols, which comprised primarily sexual minorities, combed areas that attracted gay-bashers in an effort to stop the violence.

"You know that saying 'silence equals death'? Well silence also equals victimization," says Jensen. "We have to work together."

To report a bias crime to the Portland Police Bureau, call 823-0434. Those interested in forming citizens' patrols in their neighborhoods should contact their nearest police precinct.



Zach and Sophie looking toward a new path.

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Human rights groups go to the fair

Supporters of sexual minority rights made their presence felt during the recent Oregon State Fair in Salem.

Parents from Love Makes A Family Inc., a group which advocates for the rights and recognition of gay and lesbian families, showcased memorabilia that included family portraits and snapshots of gay and lesbian pride celebrations and the mass wedding held during the 1993 national gay and lesbian rights march in Washington, D.C.

Basic Rights Oregon, a statewide group fighting several anti-gay initiatives, also had a booth at the fair.

MHRC sponsors affirmative action dialogues

The Metropolitan Human Rights Commission is sponsoring three community dialogue groups addressing affirmative action. The pilot project encourages public dialogue about important issues of the day.

Participants are expected to read background material provided by MHRC in preparation for the dialogue, and each group will meet twice for

two-hour sessions at one-week intervals.

Community Dialogue Number One will meet Tuesdays, Sept. 26 and Oct. 3, from 6:30-8:30 pm at the American Red Cross offices at 3131 N Vancouver in Portland; Community Dialogue Number Two is set for Wednesdays, Sept. 27 and Oct. 4, from 6:30-8:30 pm at Jackson Community School, 10625 SW 35th Ave.; and Community Dialogue Number Three will meet Saturdays, Sept. 30 and Oct. 7, from 10 am to noon at Koinonia House (Campus Ministry) at Portland State University, SW Montgomery and Broadway. Preregistration is necessary; call 823-5136 for more information.

Voter registration campaign kicks off Sept. 23

Freedom '95 Project, a door-to-door voter registration/education campaign for Jobs and Justice, kicks off Sept. 23.

Targeting North and Northeast Portland, Freedom '95 organizes volunteers to talk with their neighbors about a ballot initiative to raise the minimum wage, and about initiatives that target people of color, women, sexual minorities, immigrants and union members. To get involved, call the Portland Rainbow Coalition at 232-7206.

Compiled by Inga Sorensen