

# letters

## Facing real adversity

To the Editor:

I'm sorry that I couldn't respond to your reader's survey in time for you to include my thoughts into your findings. It's not that I simply put off completing the survey; I just needed this much time to come up with some of the answers.

Many of my thoughts match the ones that you have already published, so not much was lost. One question, however, asked if I was planning any major purchases in the next year. It's taken me a few months to be able to answer openly: Yes. I am saving up for a funeral.

I've never been one to set money aside. I live for the moment. But my dear, precious, gentle Martin will die soon. I have never before said this to anyone, including myself. His funeral will be the best of everything, just as his life has been. I have given myself all sorts of fake reasons why I have been saving \$50 of each paycheck this year. But finally I can now see and say why.

You also asked if I had any suggestions for making *Just Out* better. I do. I would hope that you would start limiting the length of whiny letters to the editor. Maybe 25 words? So many letters are of the same theme: "I'm feeling hurt and angry and since I am very important I want to go on for 2,000 words describing whose fault it is." This is tiresome. Perhaps you could start a column for these folks. You could call it the EPB column, short for "endless, petty bickering."

Better that these people direct their energies to volunteering at Our House, planning for next year's Race for the Cure, or teaching children how to read, than lashing out at other people. I have witnessed a man brace against months of indignities and still maintain a loving grace. When your readers whine so much, it makes me wonder what they will do when they really face adversity.

Thanks, *Just Out*, for the courage to ask for criticism. Love ya!

Ryan Qboy@aol.com

## Don't take gifts for granted

To the Editor:

I missed the survey and wanted to share my view of your newspaper. I am new to Portland, a transplant from the east (arrived May 22 at 2:30 am, three and one-half months ago, but who's counting?), and I love *Just Out*. It is part of why I love Portland. I am from a state where men and women do not even share the same gay paper! There was no community, per se. Cities, or towns as you would more honestly refer to them, had separate papers when they were only 45 minutes apart, and there was no centralized, cooperative paper that covered Connecticut gay life—even though you can drive through Connecticut in three hours, top to bottom or side to side.

Your multifaceted, cooperative community is represented well in *Just Out*. There are personal ads for the men in the back, in a small enough quantity that I don't feel like the paper is for sex sales. *Metroline*, the Hartford gay paper, was male-oriented and filled with phone-sex ads from one end to the other, often full-page ads. There was very little to read! I love your graphics, the variety of issues addressed, your comics oriented toward lesbians, gay men and whomever in sufficient variety; your calendar is my lifeline to this community and is substantive as well, and I enjoy your

articles.

As you read responses, do not be upset to find that gay men do not want to hear about women's issues. This has been discovered in gay surveys before. Even though we are lesbian, gay, bisexual and so on, we are still conditioned by this great society of ours, and men are not taught to be sensitive to or listen to women. They only do it if they choose to work at the art, and just being a gay man does not automatically imply that the motivation to be sensitive to women is there. Nor is the desire to treat them (us) as equal!

I think your paper is balanced. That's the problem for some men. Often in my experience (and in what I've read) men feel displaced if they don't dominate. Equality is just not good enough. Women are usually pleased with equality. It is a good sign that women are pleased!

Please keep doing what you are doing. If you wish to improve things, please do so using your collective inner voices as your ultimate guide. From what I've seen, those inner voices have done us very well. There may be those who have never lived deprived of a community, who may take for granted the gifts they have in Portland. Please know you are one of those gifts, that you are doing a great job, and that many of us are thrilled with *Just Out*. Keep it coming. Thank you.

Paula Casner  
Portland

## We're fortunate to have Kathy Belge

To the Editor:

Reading the Youth column by Inga Sorensen in the Sept. 1 issue of *Just Out*, "School is Hell," I had flashbacks (not for the first time) of my own confusing and difficult time in high school. Although I did not come out until after I graduated, I was considered a "queer" by many of my peers, who labeled me a "fag" and all the usual epithets. With all the abuse I received—verbal only, I was lucky—even when I was closeted (or more accurately, questioning), I can hardly imagine how much worse it might have been if I had been out. High school is the time when young people are just coming to an understanding of their sexual identity, and the violence and abuse hurled at gay, lesbian and bisexual students is like attacking a caterpillar in its chrysalis, when it is at its most vulnerable, transformatory stage.

I consider myself fortunate in many ways that have eased my journey towards my sexual identity: a supportive mother, an older gay cousin, excellent friends, a good overall support system. However, for others who are not so fortunate I am glad there is someone like Kathy Belge out there to lend a much-needed helping hand and support. Knowing Kathy personally from the various gay/lesbian/bisexual youth groups I attend, I can attest to the fact that she is a dedicated, warmhearted, assertive woman who genuinely cares about the welfare of young gay persons. The gay youth of Multnomah County are fortunate to have her on our side. Let us hope a time will come when we won't need people like Kathy Belge to help make life tolerable. High school is hard enough without the prejudice.

Anthony Schlottman  
Portland

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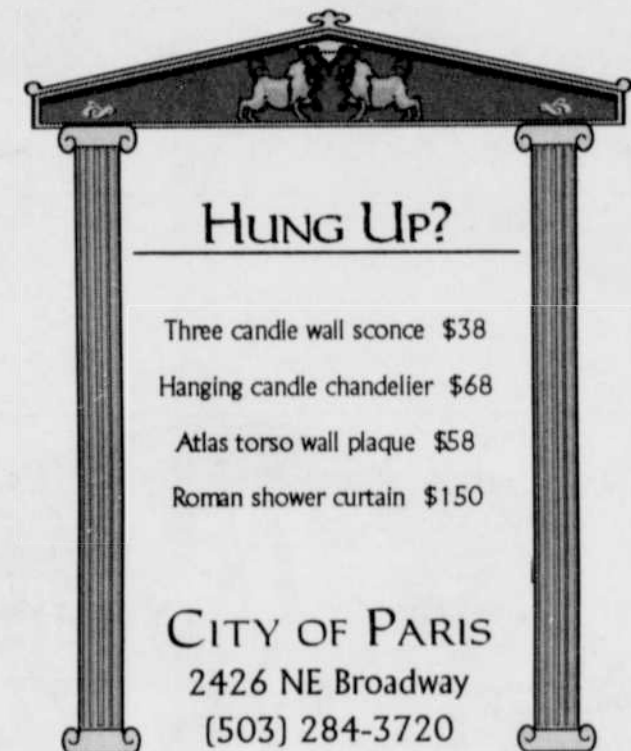


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