

# New resource line up and running

Two Portland men hope that PrideLine, their free 24-hour telephone service, will promote community

by Inga Sorensen



Imagine picking up the telephone any time of day or night, seven days a week, and finding the name of a queer-friendly restaurant or gay-positive lodging for your visiting out-of-town friends.

Dial 243-3424 and you'll be able to do just that, thanks to a new touch tone telephone service known as PrideLine. Not only will callers be able to track down gay-friendly businesses, they can comb through queer audio personals, or simply learn what the temperature is.

"We consider PrideLine to be a cross between a resource directory and *NickleAds*," explains Robb Bliss-Ranard, who along with his partner, Russ Bliss-Ranard, recently founded the Pride Visitors Association of Portland.

The organization's mission is to "provide resources, tools and information that strengthen, unify and network the lesbian and gay community of the greater Portland metropolitan area."

On Dec. 1 the duo unveiled the association's first service—PrideLine—a 24-hour interactive voicemail system which is designed as a resource tool for those who live here and "potential visitors [who wish] to discover what gay Portland has to offer."

According to Robb Bliss-Ranard, community organizations, businesses, events and announcements, political happenings, and a host of other informational tidbits may be included—free of charge—in the PrideLine listings. A free listing includes the name, address and phone number. Additional information in the listing is 10 cents per word.

Sixty-second ads are available for a charge (\$12.50 per month for businesses and organizations and \$7.50 per month for individuals). There is no charge to call the line. Each ad includes a

voice mailbox with confidential call transfer and pager notification options.

"We'll have dozens of categories that people can get information on: real estate, home services, professional services, employment listings, personals, wellness. You name it," says Bliss-Ranard. "We want to create a sense of community not only for those who live in the Portland metropolitan area, but for those who are considering visiting or moving here."

According to the Portland/Oregon Visitors Association, an estimated 28 million visitors spent more than \$1 billion in Portland in 1993. "This area can be a real tourist attraction, we just have to promote it," says Bliss-Ranard. "This is a way for gay-oriented groups and businesses and individuals to do just that."

According to Bliss-Ranard, Pride Visitors Association memberships are also available for \$25 per month. Members receive, in part, a free 60-second ad on PrideLine including a voice mailbox with call transfer, and a one-year free membership in the National Gay and Lesbian Business Alliance. Five percent of a member's annual contribution is forwarded to a nonprofit organization as a tax deductible contribution in the member's name.

In the future, the Bliss-Ranards hope to create a Pride Visitors Center, where queer businesses and organizations can display brochures and information, and a 800 number for North America which offers access to PrideLine.

For further information about PrideLine and the Pride Visitors Association of Portland, call 243-3424 or write to Pride Visitors Association, 1017 SW Morrison St., Suite 210, Portland, OR 97205-2631; e-mail: PRIDEONE@GAZE.COM.

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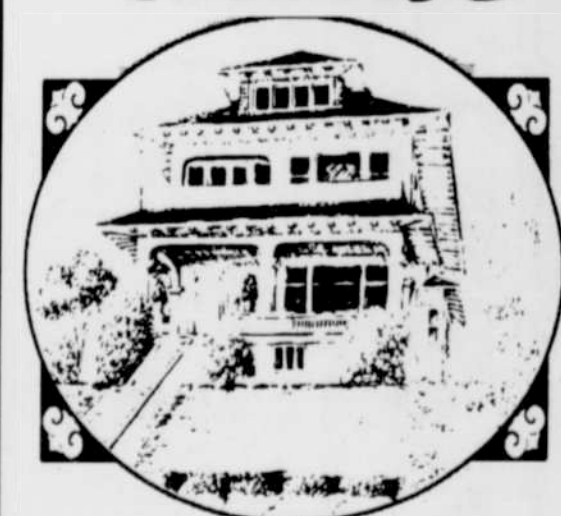
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