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## local news

### Outstanding

This year the Jack F. Abele Award goes to the irrepressible Kathleen Saadat

by Inga Sorensen



Kathleen Saadat

**Y**ou think she'd be used to it by now. After all, she is an activist who has been widely recognized for her work in the realm of human rights.

"I'll tell you—this feels pretty good," says Portland resident Kathleen Saadat, referring to her latest accolade, which takes the form of the 1997 Jack F. Abele Award. The honor is presented annually by Phoenix Rising Foundation Inc., a social services agency that has provided thousands of hours of counseling to sexual minorities and their families during the past two decades.

The award recognizes a person who has "given outstanding service to the sexual minorities communities of Oregon and Southwest Washington." Previous recipients include Jack Abele, for whom the award was named, a Portland doctor who was very involved in the community, and political activist John Baker.

The 56-year-old Saadat, a longtime advocate for a rainbow of issues, joins that list and will be honored at Phoenix Rising's Third Annual Lesbian and Gay Pride Dinner, which is set for June 13 at the Portland Hilton.

"Kathleen Saadat has given a tremendous amount to the community," says Allanya Guenther, the agency's executive director. "Among her contributions has been her work to build real bridges between the African American and sexual minorities communities."

Saadat, a 1974 graduate of Reed College, has spent much of her life promoting equality.

She has done so professionally via a potpourri of channels—as youth services director of the Portland Urban League, executive director of the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs, director of Affirmative Action for the State of Oregon, and assistant to Portland City Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury.

Saadat is currently a private consultant, a trainer in the areas of human diversity and organizational development, and a motivational speaker.

She is also a member of the Portland Rainbow Coalition's steering committee and is the coordinator of African Americans for Human Rights, which was formed in 1992 in response to Ballot Measure 9, a statewide anti-gay-rights initiative.

"I consider myself to be a pretty lucky per-

son," says Saadat, "because I get to do things that can make a difference in other people's lives."

Saadat's past involvements include stints as a steering committee member for the No on 9 Campaign, a mediator with Portland's King Neighborhood Facility, a board member of Bradley-Angle House, a member of United Way's community organization and planning committee, and a member of the first planning committee for Portland's Black Women's gathering.

The June 1993 issue of *Oregon Business Magazine* listed Saadat as one of the "100 Who Lead" in Oregon.

She has also been honored by Oregon State University, the Lesbian Community Project, the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment and the Oregon chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

"I think it's important to say that while people like me—that is, people who are verbal and visible—get recognized for their work, there are countless others who are less visible who are doing more. We have to remember that," says Saadat, who enjoys her downtime by reading, playing Big Boggle or racquetball.

As for her future, Saadat says she intends to craft a "plan."

"I don't have one and I think I should," she says.

Don't be surprised if it revolves around activism of some sort.

"Anyone who maintains human rights are no longer an issue is not paying attention," says Saadat. "What they are really saying is that their particular area of focus may have calmed down."

She adds, "As long as there continues to be a push for 'English Only' policies, welfare reform and attacks on immigrants, that simply proves there is plenty of work left to be done."

*Phoenix Rising's Third Annual Lesbian and Gay Pride Dinner will be held June 13 at the Portland Hilton.*

*Beverly Stein, chair of the Multnomah County Commission, will present Saadat with the Jack F. Abele Award. Local jazz pianist Michael Alan Harrison will provide music.*

*Tickets are \$75 per person; business and corporate tables for 10 are available for \$750.*

*To purchase tickets, call Phoenix Rising at 223-8299.*

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