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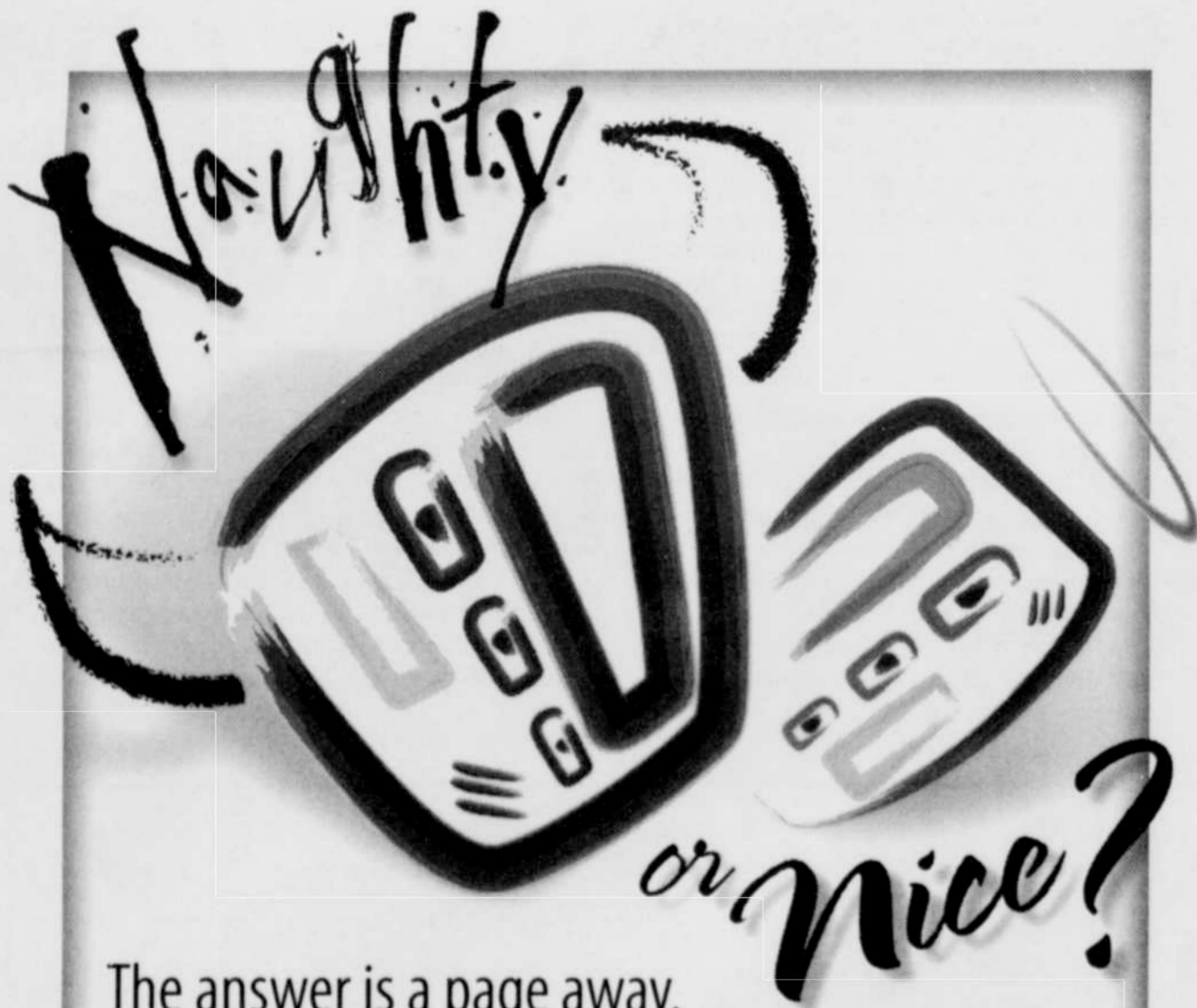
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## local news

### Disco-test

Youth lined up at *The Rage* on a recent night didn't just come to dance, they came to get tested for HIV

by Patrick Collins

Amid a swirl of high-energy dance music, club lighting and video screens, about 80 young men and women were tested for HIV during the late-night hours of Nov. 13 and early into the next morning.

The event, dubbed The Party of Life Show, was sponsored by Cascade AIDS Project, Outside In and The Rage Nightclub, a primarily underage downtown dance club that attracts many queer youth. Along with oral HIV testing, the evening featured free admission, free condoms and live performances.

Zachary Heusinkveld, 21, organized the event. He says he got the idea from "testing parties" where people soften the harsh edges of the experience by going in for an HIV test in groups.

From that starting point the idea germinated into the concept of bringing the testing services to

subject isn't such a taboo anymore. We're figuring out how sex is being adapted to our lives."

John Brown, a 17-year-old from Lake Oswego, says he was a little nervous about being tested in such a public environment.

"I'm addicted to this place," he says. "I'm here every weekend, and I know most of the people here. They are all going to see that I'm getting tested. But I think this experience will help people—it will scare them. It scares me."

Brown, who describes himself as 90 percent safe, adds, "People say, 'I can't get that, because I'm clean and good.' People don't see what can happen. But if something happens to one of your friends you might change your habits. I think seeing people die would change a lot of people."

Dawn Spellman coordinates CAP's HIV counseling and testing program. "The best part of this is that the idea to do testing here came from



Videos help to keep nerves at bay as young people wait outside the makeshift HIV testing area above *The Rage* Nightclub in Portland

those least likely to access them otherwise—in this case, the under-21 crowd.

Heusinkveld, who has experienced Portland's street and youth cultures as both a homeless person and a volunteer outreach worker for Outside In, says he was impressed with the support his idea received.

"There were a lot of people from the agencies who offered to volunteer for this event," he tells *Just Out*. "It shows they care about what's going on."

someone who's part of the youth population we're trying to reach," she says. "And he has much more awareness of these issues than any of us at the agencies."

Spellman also admits she doesn't have any catch-all answers about how to best reach the youth population.

"Older people have seen AIDS in a very direct way. For young people it's always been a part of their lives, and I don't think it's as scary for them

*"I think we're breaking through some of the repression of earlier generations when it comes to our ability to talk about issues around safer sex and AIDS. The subject isn't such a taboo anymore. We're figuring out how sex is being adapted to our lives."*

—Zachary Heusinkveld

The large turnout, he adds, offers a glimmer of hope when it comes to understanding the way that many young people perceive HIV/AIDS.

"The idea that sex can kill you has gotten through," Heusinkveld says. "I think we're breaking through some of the repression of earlier generations when it comes to our ability to talk about issues around safer sex and AIDS. The

because they're used to it," she says. "Also, since AIDS doesn't happen overnight after infection, it's less immediate. And the protease inhibitors are pacifying people even more. People seem to be taking more chances than before."

Both Spellman and Heusinkveld, meanwhile, say they hope to see similar testing events in the near future.