

PROFILE

Good clean (and sober) fun*Live and Let Live Club hosts a social to celebrate its new home and 17 years of service*

by Patrick Collins

After its near-death experience in 1996, the Live and Let Live Club is back, healthier and more alive than ever. The group will celebrate its 17th birthday on Dec. 6.

The club offers meeting space to 12-step recovery groups for members of the sexual minority community facing drug and alcohol addiction. All of the meetings are grounded in the Alcoholics Anonymous tradition.

Jean Duncan, Live and Let Live's fund-raising coordinator, describes the Dec. 6 celebration as an opportunity to reminisce about the last 17 years of friendship and recovery in a clean and sober environment.

The club started, unofficially, in 1976 as a potluck meeting. Two other regular meetings began in 1979. With the addition of a fourth meeting, Live and Let Live was officially founded and opened its doors in December 1980, only two blocks from its present location.

Duncan stresses that providing those in recovery with a space for socializing is an essential part of the club's mission.

"We're the only sponsor of clean and sober social activities for the sexual minority community in Portland," she says. "Social events like this provide more glue in the recovery process, a place to relearn social skills without drugs or alcohol. It's an alternative to the bar."

Duncan, who has served on the board of directors for the past three years, says she is pleased with the club's recovery.

In 10 years, Live and Let Live has moved seven times. Last year the organization nearly folded, plagued by a series of unsuitable locations, the last one of which cost the club a good deal of money in the form of fines paid to the City of Portland for code violations.

"Every move we made cost us money and members," she says, sitting in the bright and comfortably furnished "living room" of the club's present location at 2940 Southeast Belmont.

When the club left its temporary housing at the Metropolitan Community Church, for instance, six of its regular meetings stayed behind.

"With the membership at less than 20 we began to question if there was a need," Duncan admits.

Of course there was, she says now, speaking with the relief of someone who's come through the fire and lived to tell the story.

The club received grant funds from the Equity Foundation and the Living Enrichment Center, as well as donations and pledges of support from

members. It is also currently negotiating for a lease that will last from three to five years.

Live and Let Live currently has 107 members and offers 15 meetings per week, ranging from women-only AA groups to a youth-oriented sexual diversity roundtable. The club plans to begin offering a 12-step meeting for incest survivors in the near future.

Duncan's wish list for Live and Let Live's future includes permanent housing, a reference library for recovery, and expanding the diversity of meetings.

"I want this to be a hub of recovery," she says. "Getting funding is tricky, though. We're an odd duck as an organization. We're an official nonprofit, but getting grants for a group which serves sexual minorities who

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are in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction is very specific."

One longtime member of Live and Let Live who spoke on condition of anonymity, says his involvement with the club has been a cornerstone for his recovery. He feels it's important for sexual minorities to have their own recovery meetings.

nerable moment because of your sexual orientation, I think you lose something in the process.

"Recovery is about learning to live with an addiction," he continues. "It's not about sexual orientation. Also, gays and lesbians have issues around their addictions that heterosexuals may not have to deal with, issues around their partners,

their families and how open they are."

He says that before he quit drinking he viewed himself as a second-class citizen.

"I had no idea how I fit into the gay community," he says. "Doing social maneuvers sober made a huge difference. It's a whole different atmosphere if you're not drinking."

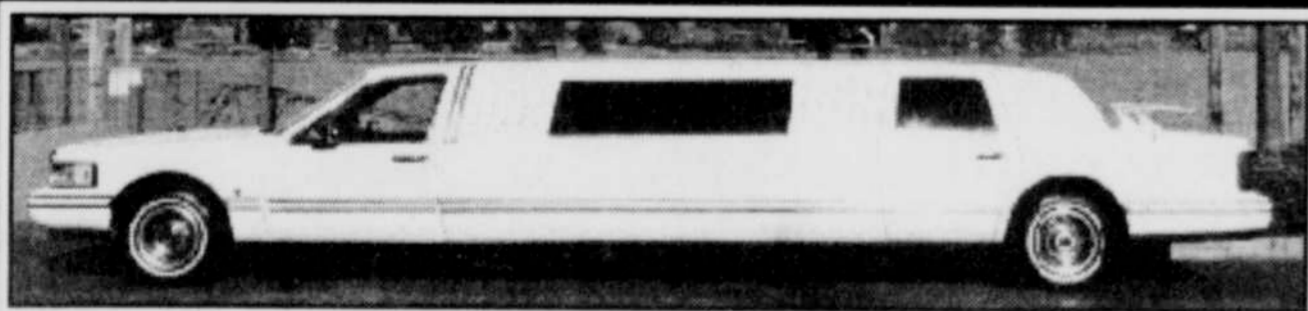
Sober since June 1985, he now owns his own business and says he enters situations as an openly gay man.

"In my life," he says, "I've made a choice for recovery."

The club's anniversary festivities kick off at 6:30 pm Saturday, Dec. 6, at Helensview High School, 8678 NE Sumner St. in Portland. The evening features hors d'oeuvres, a dance and a raffle with prizes ranging from free massages to free desserts. Admission is \$4 for nonmembers and \$2 for members. For more information about the event, or Live and Let Live Club, call 238-6091.



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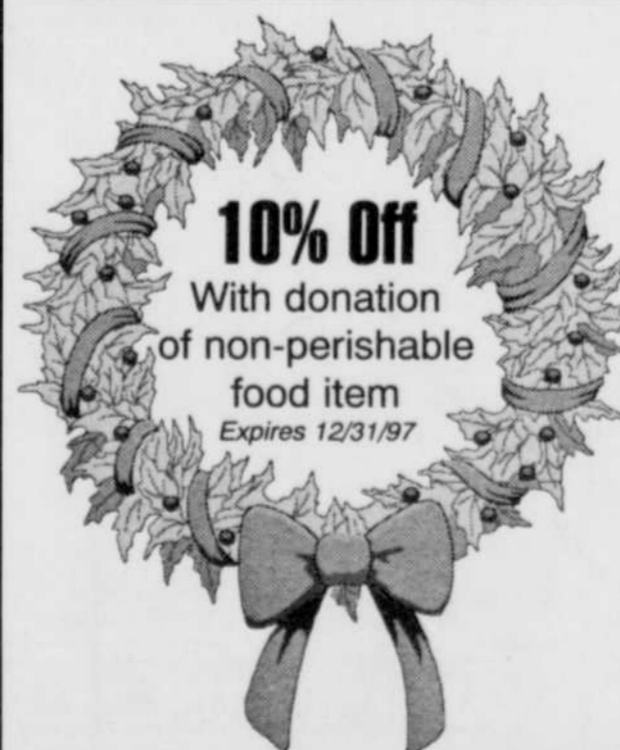


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