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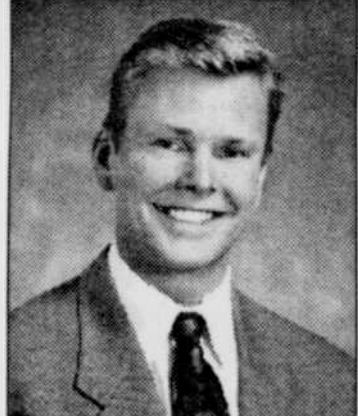
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## LOCAL news

# GIVING WITH ABANDON

For two Portland restaurateurs, charitable contributions are business as usual by Patrick Collins

Fred Cash views it in terms of reciprocity. Michael Cox sees it as a natural part of running a successful business, as well as an extension of his values. Together, the two owners of Wild Abandon, a bistro located at 2411 SE Belmont St., are bolstering some of queer Portland's favorite causes.

"This is our neighborhood," says Cash. "People come in and we provide nourishment in a very immediate way. Our customers support us

He got his first taste of the restaurant industry at the age of 13 in his hometown of Fruita, Colo., where he worked as a dishwasher. At Wild Abandon he bakes desserts, waits tables, and writes menus.

"I live and breathe this thing," he says, adding, "As someone who has worked in restaurants for so long, it was important to me to create a place where the customers and the employees are happy, where we're part of the community instead of just a business."



From left: Wild Abandon co-owner Michael Cox with employees Frank, Kouri, Joshua, Eden, Barbra and Lance

financially, and we support the community by supporting issues and charities that are important to them, and to us as well."

Cox views the business' support of groups such as Cascade AIDS Project and Our House of Portland, a residential facility for those living with AIDS, in a more personal vein.

"We've all lost too many people to AIDS,"

Cash, who bought into Wild Abandon last year, is the more political of the pair.

As Cox tended to tables and checked on the kitchen, Cash shared with *Just Out* his experiences and vision. Every answer he gave begged no fewer than 10 more questions.

"I was born while my parents were on vacation, and I've been traveling ever since," he says,

**"This is our neighborhood. People come in and we provide nourishment in a very immediate way. Our customers support us financially, and we support the community by supporting issues and charities that are important to them, and to us as well."**

—Fred Cash

he says. "The whole epidemic has taken a toll on me emotionally, and owning a business provides me with a vehicle to contribute. There's really no reason not to."

The duo estimates Wild Abandon donated a total of \$5,500 in 1997 to organizations such as Bradley-Angle House, Outside In, Lesbian Community Project, Basic Rights Oregon and Phoenix Rising Foundation.

It has also provided program support to events such as LCP's softball tournament and the annual Right to Pride dinner, and served up food donations to Our House and others.

Cox, 38, has logged 25 years in the eatery biz, working at several Portland establishments, as well as in Las Vegas and Los Angeles, where he waited on Bette Davis six months before her death.

"She was demanding," he recounts, "but not a bitch. Definitely not a bitch."

then sips his coffee. It's not clear where he's from, or even where, exactly, he might be going.

What is clear is his passion for politics.

"I worked in the food service business at night, which allowed me to agitate during the day," says Cash, 43, who has dabbled in community radio and the anti-nuclear movement. In addition, he helped craft a 1996 ballot measure which raised Oregon's minimum wage, and in 1986 helped charter the Oregon coast's first chapter of the National Organization for Women, in which he was the first male member.

He also chaired the Multnomah County Democratic Central Committee from 1992 to 1995.

"That's been my driving force, I think. The belief that people accomplish things via building blocks, by bringing groups together and working through the mainstream," he says.