speak out

else in high school, and certainly not anywhere in the city, except in gay clubs, where we spent all our time.

I didn't come out till college because I knew I liked boys and the concept of bisexuality was continents away from my mind or the minds of anyone I talked to about sexuality. When I returned to San Antonio a few years ago and saw a "lesbian and gay community center," I was delighted. This is the city that up until a few years ago never had a pride parade. They had a quiet little please-don't-beat-us-up picnic in a park, but nothing else.

My perception of Portland is different. In Portland, I have kissed women on the street; there are rainbow flags everywhere. It feels safe to be queer in this city. Not that it's perfect there will always be assholes everywhere. But it feels no less safe to be queer in this city than it does to be a woman, or to be Jewish, and from what I have been told, considerably more safe than it is to be African American.

So I think a queer community center in Portland would be a waste of money—money that perhaps would be better spent putting a queer community center out in eastern Oregon, or in Salem, where queers have less support, where it appears to be less safe to be openly queer.

EVE LYONS Portland

## OCTA doesn't back homophobic projects

TO THE EDITOR:

In the discussion of Phoenix Rising's potential relationship with Network Behavioral HealthCare Inc. ["Coming Clean," Just Out, Feb. 5], our organization, the Office of Consumer Technical Assistance, is mentioned as supporting a speaker who teaches a counseling method that "claims to cure homosexuality."

This claim [made by activist Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan at a public meeting] is untrue.

The Office of Consumer Technical Assistance is an affiliate of NBHC. We are a statewide consumer-run outreach organization—all employees of OCTA have received mental health services for major mental illnesses. Our mission is to increase mental health consumer voice throughout the Oregon public mental health system. To that end, we provide monthly seed grant funding to consumers and consumer-run groups for projects that increase consumer empowerment and involvement throughout the state. MASS

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One project that we partially funded was a workshop by Janet Foner, called *Take Charge of Your Mind: Crisis Prevention and Listening Skills for Community Leaders.* This workshop focused on common practices of peer counseling, such as listening skills, creating a personal support network, avoiding stress and overwork. There is nothing in this workshop about sexual orientation or curing homosexuality. A staff person from our office has attended Janet Foner's training in the past and can attest to this fact.

The Office of Consumer Technical Assistance has a mission of increased empowerment and inclusion of *all* mental health consumers in Oregon.

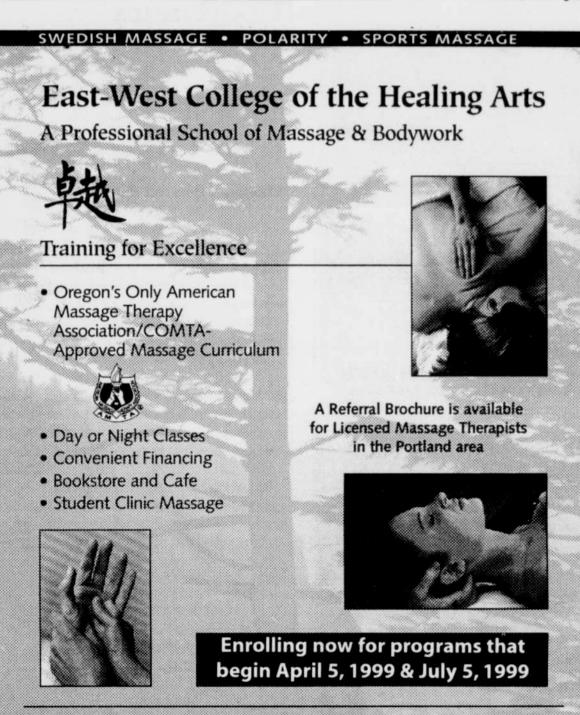
This includes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual mental health consumers. We would not support or fund a project that was exclusionary or homophobic in nature, as O'Hartigan attests in the article. That is antithetical to the goals of our program.

As far as the potential partnership between NBHC and Phoenix Rising, I would encourage Phoenix Rising to strongly consider this option and not be swayed by false allegations about our program. NBHC allows our program to operate with full autonomy, while providing us with needed fiscal and administrative support. It is a beneficial partnership for both organizations and I am confident Phoenix Rising could find similar benefits in its own future partnership with NBHC.

MIRIAM GERSHOW

Resource and communication coordinator Office of Consumer Technical Assistance Portland

JUST asking In a rain-induced funk, a Just Out staff



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## if other water-soaked readers are also tired of this damn rain.



MICHELLE HARRIS Portland Administrative services assistant, Oregon Human Society "Yes, definitely. I can't wait for summer

and Peacock in the

Park."



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DAN BAKER Portland Job-seeking student "Bain is one thing

"Rain is one thing, but this is ridiculous."



Portland Property manager "Yes, that's why I rush away to central Oregon every chance I get."

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