

Pet of the Week



"Angel"

Angel is a male young adult medium haired cat. In the course of his short young life Angel has not seen the good things that life has to offer. Angel was brought in as a stray. He needs a loving environment as an "inside kitty" because he has been declawed. He needs to feel safe and loved. Please help Angel find a home.

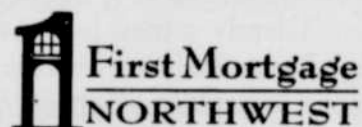
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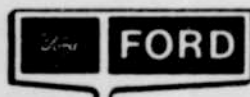
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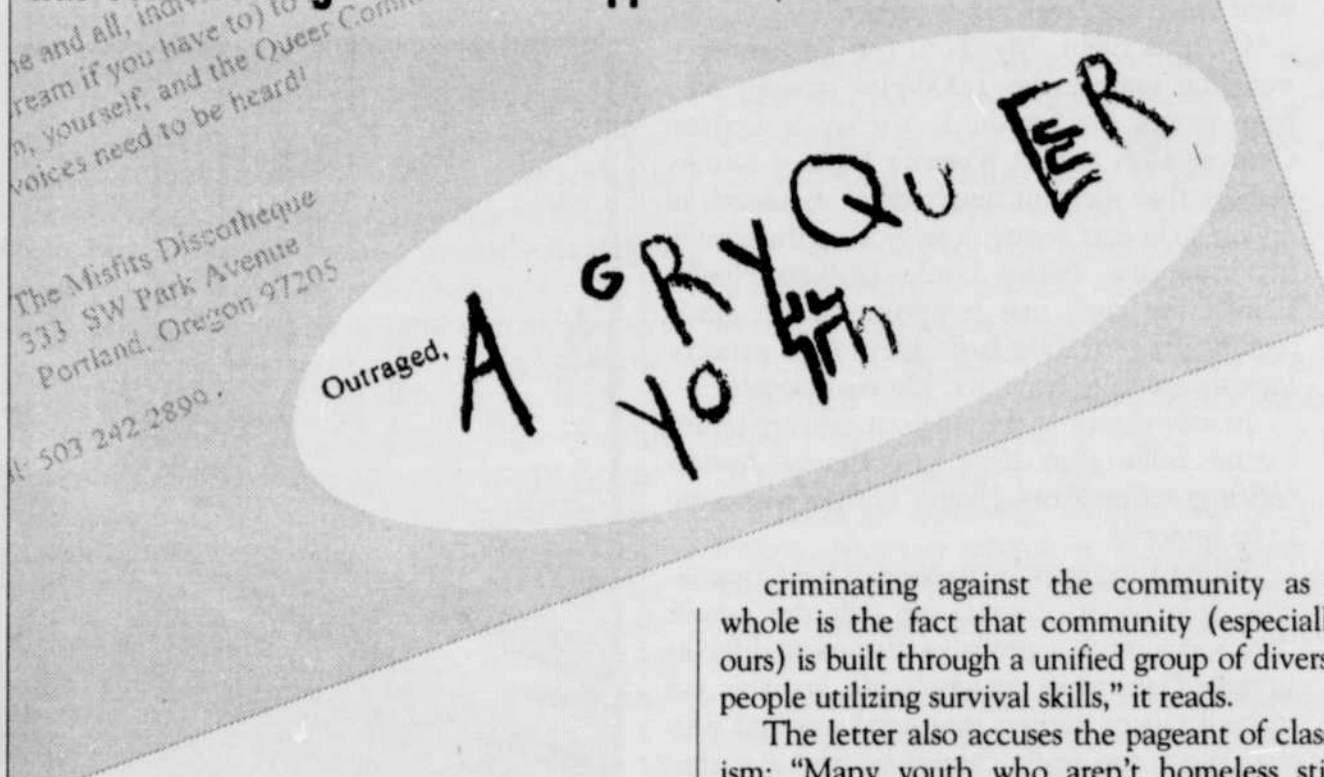


2173 NE Broadway, Portland OR 97232

LOCAL news

THORNY ISSUE

New judging criteria for this year's Rosebud and Thorn pageant has some fuming while others applaud by Patrick Collins



The missive, circulated through downtown Portland a few weeks ago, makes itself perfectly clear: "We are queer youth," it states.

The letter's author—who could not be reached for comment despite several attempts—then blasts new criteria regarding moral character that have been added to Rosebud and Thorn, a nearly quarter-century-old pageant for queer youth.

Simply signed "Angry Queer Youth," the letter spells out the deal: "Moral character and being a positive role model is defined as one who is not currently or has been in the past involved with sex work."

Two contestants were eliminated from this year's pageant, slated for March 20, after their initial interviews, prompting the circulation of the letter, which urges readers to contact pageant officials.

"I've felt a lot of pressure to clean things up," says Pete Ryan, who purchased what is now known as Misfits Discoteque last summer from the oft-controversial Lanny Swerdlow.

Swerdlow, who operated the Rage and the legendary City Nightclub, bequeathed not only the queer youth club but the Rosebud and Thorn pageant—a heralded tradition in the queer youth community—as well.

"Up until now the pageant hasn't had any structure," Ryan explains. "The club has been threatened in the past, and all I'm trying to do is organize things."

The letter writer paints a more ominous picture: "Our community would not exist in the organized...fashion we currently reside in, if when times were rough we didn't do what we have to do to survive. Sex work is a very common survival mechanism in the queer community, especially in the youth community."

For his part, Ryan contends it was not the alleged sex worker status that caused the contestants to be eliminated.

"These two people used the word *fuck* throughout their interviews," he says. "It hit everyone on the panel wrong. We're trying to get the young people back into the community, and they will represent our club. It didn't feel right, the way they talked during the interview."

Ryan assembled a screening panel composed of Misfits staff, queer youth and a representative from the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court.

According to the letter, the panel's tactics were more harmful than anything else.

"One reason we feel this is extremely dis-

criminating against the community as a whole is the fact that community (especially ours) is built through a unified group of diverse people utilizing survival skills," it reads.

The letter also accuses the pageant of classism: "Many youth who aren't homeless still struggle to survive and sometimes turn tricks to make ends meet. In effect, this club is being classist in its policies and attitudes towards our community. We don't like it."

Ryan, meanwhile, admits to being down on sex work.

"As a whole, I don't think our community approves of kids going out and turning tricks," he says, explaining that in the past when he's been in financial straits he's taken on additional jobs—like washing dishes—to make rent.

"I don't believe in this business of breaking the law to survive, and I'm not sure that I want people who are admittedly breaking the law to be representing the club," he says candidly.

Craig Hollywood, Mr. Gay Portland XXIII, sat on the screening panel and agrees with Ryan about the two contestants who were eliminated.

"I don't recall anyone saying they turned tricks, but it was a bad presentation they gave," he says. "What if they were talking to a journalist or a publicist?"

Hollywood is also the pageant coordinator for Rosebud and Thorn, as well as the show coordinator at Misfits. He says a more stringent screening process for the pageant is an idea that is long overdue.

"Every candidate had to go through the same process," he says. "We asked them questions such as what they planned to do with the title, and how they would represent the community. These are very fair questions."

Maria, a community mainstay, says the screening process makes plenty of sense. Five years ago, Maria (who opts for the singular moniker) was crowned the first female Rose Empress. Now, at 35, she produces Peacock in the Park, the annual drag festival.

"I'm in agreement with the idea of a screening process," she says, admitting she can swear with the best of them but that she knows when to watch her mouth. "In the past it's been very lax and people could say and do whatever they wanted. It's good to know who's applying to represent the underage community, and it's good for the contestants to know what their duties and responsibilities are."

She says that she too would be turned off by hearing profanity during an interview.

Maria posits: "If you have someone who doesn't know how to hold themselves in public, do you really want them representing the club and the community? I don't."

■ **The ROSEBUD AND THORN pageant will be held at 10 p.m. Saturday, March 20, at Misfits, 333 S.W. Park Ave. in Portland. Admission is \$9.**