

"I'm amazed," Tyler adds. "Things happen in my life in a way they've never happened before. I can't think of anything bad that's happened to me as a result of the change.... It's gotten to be a joyous experience to be alive."

W.O.



Rene UNGERECHT

What Rene Ungerecht, a professional advocate for women, likes most about gay pride celebrations is the richness of the human tapestry.

"I love it because it's my chance to go out and see what other people like me look like," she remarks, especially eager for this year's festivities.

Now 42, she has participated in the gay pride parade off and on since the early 1980s, when she was a student at Portland State University.

This year is extra special for Ungerecht because Laura Hershey and Robin Stevens, her good friends in the queer disabled community, will be in town to participate in the parade, and Hershey will give the Marguerite Brodie Lecture, named after an Oregon disability rights activist who died last year.

"The best part of the parade is the unity, marching with friends and supporting each other," she says, recalling her early days as an activist for the differently abled.

Ungerecht and Stevens attended college together and were both members of the Equal

Access Coalition, an early disability rights group active before the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"Tri-Met eventually put lifts on their buses because of our pressure—not because of federal law or because it was the right thing to do," Ungerecht recalls, still angry at how long the struggle lasted. "When we finally got lifts they were only on four runs, and could only be used at certain times and at certain stops."

After many years of constant pressure and protests from the EAC, Tri-Met finally expanded the service.

When asked how the gay community rates in dealing with its disabled members, Ungerecht says she's disappointed.

"Sometimes it feels like nothing's gotten any better—I always feel like making space for us is an afterthought," she explains, repeating words she has heard too many times: "Oh we forgot to make a ramp."

Ungerecht says that people who are planning events "rarely include accessibility in their initial schemes."

Still, some progress has been made. "Thanks to Marguerite Brodie, In Other Words is now accessible," she says, smiling for a change.

Most of all, Ungerecht is proud that our parade will feature stars of the disability community—fresh from an award ceremony at the White House no less. Ungerecht and a large contingent of disabled queers will be marching right behind them, doing wheelies in their chairs.

O.G.

Stef-Anie WELLS

This gal is a fabulous study in contrasts. She's a red-haired beauty of 28 who likes to refer jokingly to herself as a "lesbian goddess"—but hey, if the shoe fits.... (And fitting is something she knows about, since Wells is an aspiring clothing designer who has been working in the fashion industry for eight years.)

Yet she tools to her job at a très chic store on her motorcycle. As Wells says, "My three dyke points are: motorcycle, SUV and sensible shoes."

Wells has been a volunteer at Cascade AIDS Project, helping to plan events and parties. And in years past, she was an enthusiastic member of the Lesbian Avengers.

Asked what attracted her to join up with the Avengers, Wells replies: "They just got things done—not a lot of red tape."

One direct action she recalls fondly was the night the whole troupe of young dykes penetrated a bar in Vancouver, Wash., and spent the evening dancing together to force the owner to

change his policy toward same-sex couples dancing.

When the police arrived, they explained to the owner that it isn't against the law for women to dance with women. And gay couples have been welcome there ever since.

Wells looks forward to the pride celebration every year.



"I really like everyone getting together—the camaraderie between the lesbians and the gay men—I like the whole sense of community," she says.

Wells also thinks the event dredges folks out of their ruts. "Pride brings out people who usually just stay home and watch their cats play," she says with a bit of 20-something sass.

Wells will definitely be participating in the Dyke March—in a new fetish outfit she's designed. And how's this for a contrast: She's also planning to ride in the Sunday parade with Dykes on Bikes—in a velvet mini-skirt.

O.G.



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