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LOCAL news

TONE IT DOWN

Cascade AIDS Project is scaling back the Neighborhood MenTalk program, but there's a movement afoot to shore it up by Inga Sorensen

For the past two years, Geoffrey Bateman delved into the world of AIDS in the most constructive way he knew how.

"I wanted to help," he told *Just Out* a few days before his scheduled July 15 departure from Cascade AIDS Project, a social service agency providing nonmedical HIV- and AIDS-related services to people in Oregon and southwest Washington.

Bateman is one of several staffers to exit CAP of late during a reorganization led by Thomas Bruner, the agency's executive director of the past 11 months.

The shift has created a slew of job openings at the agency, and led to some significant alterations of various programs, most notably CAP's Speak to Your Brothers prevention program.

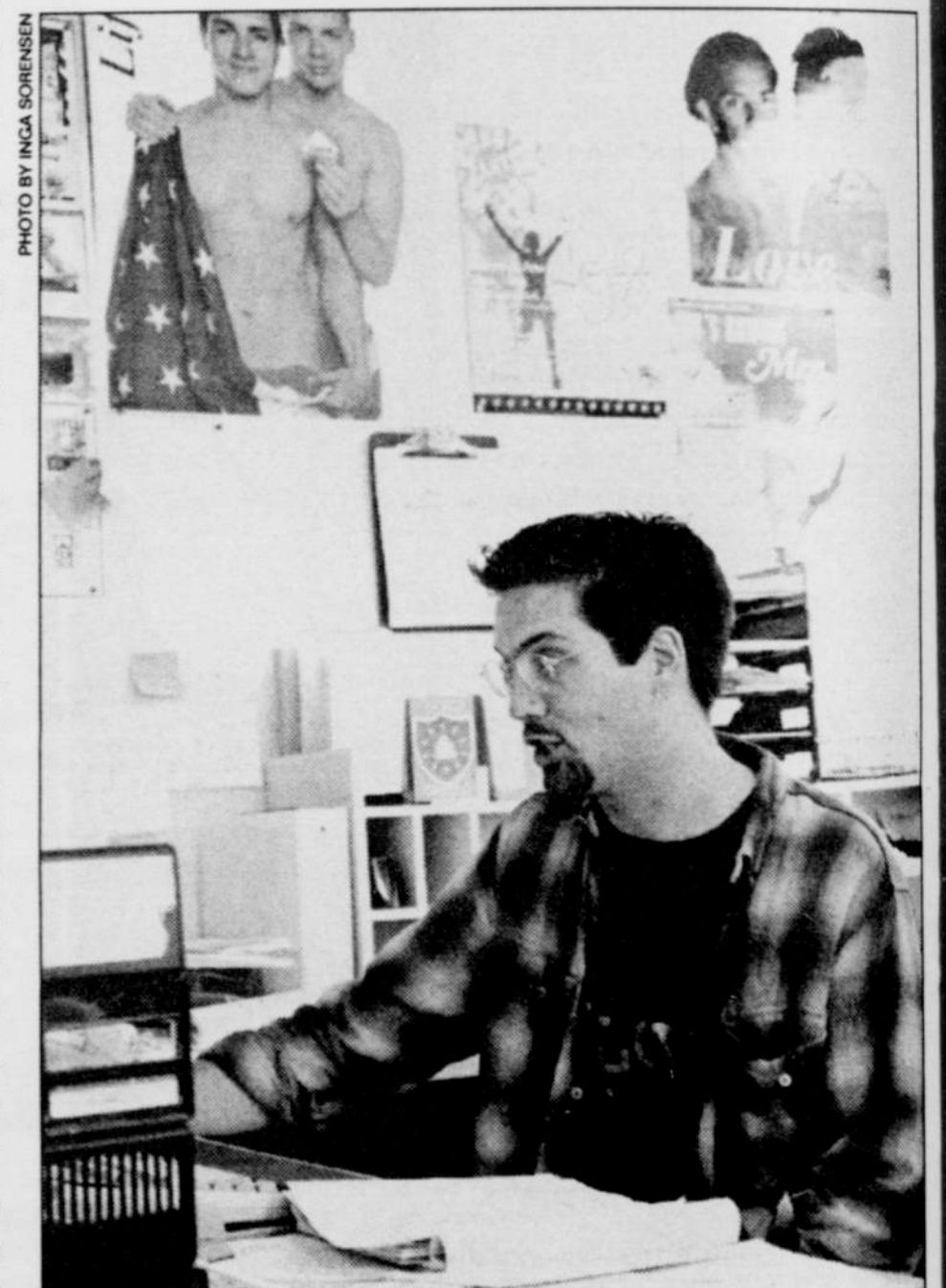
Just Out's June 18 issue reported on CAP management's decision to shutter the agency's 5-year-old HIV counseling and testing program by July for financial reasons. The program, fueled by a contingent of mostly gay and bi male volunteers, offered queer guys of all ages a comfortable place to receive HIV counseling and testing.

"It's a new day at CAP," Bruner said. "The new day is here, and with it comes some new, hard, painful realities."

The counseling and testing program isn't the only program to feel the pain. The scope of CAP's

Bateman, who coordinated the program, says that gay and bi men have found the groups to be an alternative to the bar scene—a place where they can get together to talk about issues important to them. Issues like body image, sex, dating and relationships, drug and alcohol use, and bisexuality.

On July 8, CAP hosted a community meeting at 3 Friends Coffeehouse in Southeast Portland for folks interested in discussing the future of Neighborhood MenTalk.



Geoffrey Bateman hard at work in his former office

CAP's Neighborhood MenTalk program has been sliced big time. The popular program, which had grown to 14 groups, is being scaled back to six groups.

MenTalk gives queer guys a place to get together to talk and socialize, with the goal of building a sense of community. Hundreds of men have participated in the groups during the past year.

bathhouse HIV intervention program has been reduced (though HIV and STD screening will continue in the bathhouse via the Multnomah County Health Department).

Finally, CAP's Neighborhood MenTalk program has been sliced big time. The popular program, which had grown to 14 groups, is being scaled back to six groups.

MenTalk gives queer guys a place to get together throughout the Portland metro area to talk and socialize, with the goal of building a sense of community. Hundreds of men have participated in the groups during the past year.

The MenTalk newsletter, which had been sent to 1,400 recipients, will now go to 500 people, and the number of newsletter pages will also be reduced.

According to Bateman, an estimated 50 men turned out for the meeting.

"What they said was: 'What can we do to help?'" Bateman reports.

Be it cutting checks, or volunteering to help out, or forming an advisory board to influence the program's direction, the guys wanted to do something.

"And that is so heartening to me," says Bateman, adding, "You always like to think people will be there during a time of need, so to see it actually happen makes you feel very good."

He adds: "It especially makes me feel better knowing that when I'm gone, there will remain a dedicated group of volunteers who feel strongly about the program. It's been an exceptional two years for me."

Luxury Defined:

HARD MILLED SOAPS

Soap was invented in Roman times, and for many centuries bathing with it was considered a luxury. But with the quality of early soaps, which were crudely-produced brittle blocks, it's hard to believe the process of lathering was really all that luxurious. Soap quality eventually improved with the advent of the "milling" process, in which soap is run through a series of rollers to eliminate excess water and air.

While most mass-produced soaps are no longer milled, "Hardmilled" or "triple-milled" soaps are still available to buyers seeking the best in texture and quality. Unlike the softer soaps you'll find in the grocery store, these soaps resist cracking, retain their fragrance, and last much longer in the soap dish.



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