

FROM PCC TO MTV?

Activist, student and performer Miss Lace 1998 wants her MTV—among other things by Shona Dudley

"People assume that young people who come to Misfits [a Portland all-ages dance club] are doing drugs, homeless, all messed up," says Miss Lace 1998, a.k.a. Nicole H. "Young people need to get up and stand up for themselves, and show people what we're really like."

The 20-year-old woman, who chose not to have her last name published, is an associate of arts transfer-degree student at Portland Community College's Cascade Campus in North Portland. She is also president of the campus gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans club.

For the second consecutive year, she has received the David Evans Memorial Scholarship, a \$500 award for journalism students. She has also been a recipient of PCC's Service to Community Scholarship, which recognizes students for their volunteer work.

"I've been doing volunteer work since I was 14," says Nicole, sounding very much the seasoned pro. "Last year I volunteered for [Cascade AIDS Project] in their teen-to-teen program. We went into high schools and other places where there are a lot of youths and did workshops based on boundary setting, communication skills and condom demonstrations. We tried to teach youths how to use these tools to help prevent them from contracting HIV."

And she's currently working with preschoolers, helping "kids learn to stand up for themselves and feel good about themselves," she explains.

When she was a senior at Benson High School, Nicole wrote an article about the school needing a gay and lesbian club.

"I felt like I was the only person there who wasn't straight," she says, echoing the sentiments of so many queer kids everywhere. "I got some negative feedback—guys would follow me down the halls saying 'dyke' and other comments—but I also got some positive feedback, too."

And my best friend, Hugo, came out to me because of it. It was worth it."

Still, she concedes, the high school years were tough. "At Benson, I wasn't a very good student," she recalls, adding, "Now I'm doing really well. I like college a lot more than high school."

"Young people need to get up and stand up for themselves, and show people what we're really like."

Nicole H. at a school event in October 1998

Nicole says she hopes to transfer to a school in New York next fall—Manhattan College, perhaps—but she says she doesn't know for sure where she'll go yet.

"My cousin attends Morris Brown in Atlanta, and it's right across the street from CNN. A lot of students intern there," she notes. "So he's trying to convince me to go there instead. I'm considering it."

Mostly she just wants to get out of Portland.

"I've lived here my whole life, and now I'm waiting to leave," she says. "Sometimes I feel like I know everyone in Portland."

Her dream job? Working for MTV.

—Nicole H.

"MTV is the youth version of everything—news, sports, fashion, music—all in one place," she explains. "I'd like to do their newscasts."

But Nicole quickly adds that she's not sure what exactly she wants to do yet.

"The field of journalism is so open that I don't want to limit myself," she explains. "I want to be able to express myself, and talk about issues, and educate people. There are so many different jobs that one can have."

It's an optimistic and expansive attitude she applies across the board.

"There are so many things I want to do," she says. "I want to travel. I'm going to Paris with my Mom next spring, and I want to go to Africa."

As for role models, Nicole says: "I'm majorly obsessed with Oprah. I admire her so much. People always told her she couldn't do what she wanted to do—because she's black, and she's a woman, and she's not 135 pounds. That sort of sums me up, too."

Nicole's tenure as Miss Lace ends July 31, and she will be performing her step-down show July 23 at Misfits, 333 S.W. Park Ave. in Portland.

"I like performing," she says. "You've seen a drag show? It's like that, but it's me instead of a drag queen. And Hugo is in each of my shows."

just asking

For this issue, Just Out's question was: "What is the main focus or activity of your social life?"



CLAUDETTE EIKENBERRY
Springfield
Human rights activist

"The main focus of my social life is maintaining support for the transgendered community."



EVAN GATES
Eugene
Chef

"I like to hang out with the drag queens, and I'm an avid nudist. I also cycle a lot. I do frequent Eugene's two gay bars, for lack of a better environment to meet guys."



JILL BISHOP
Eugene
Social service worker

"I have an extended circle of friends with whom I do many things—barbecues, camping and other outdoor activities."



CHERYL FOSTER
Eugene
Student

"I don't have a partner, so for socializing I attend Lesbian Connection functions and sometimes go to Neighbors [bar]."

You have questions—"Just Asking" will get the answers! To submit a query, contact Just Out via fax at (503) 236-1257; via e-mail at justout@justout.com; or via the USPS at P.O. Box 14400, Portland, OR 97293-0400.

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