

# NORTHWEST news

All-ages clubs and other youth hangouts are also on the list of areas to receive foot patrol protection. Therefore, youth and young adults are encouraged to apply.

Mel Rudd, 23, is the coordinator of Youth-Net, a Portland-area group that links young queers with mentors and other resources. A regular participant in the Sexual Minorities Roundtable, Rudd often supplies a youth perspective at meetings.

Rudd is supportive of the foot patrol but notes that young people may harbor skepticism around law enforcement issues.

"On the other hand," Rudd says, "we want to have a partnership with the police. But we need to talk about how these laws affect youth. My first priority is to youth and to make sure that they're heard."

According to Rudd, youths might be reluctant to report violations of curfew and tagging laws. And some youths say the laws are enforced selectively.

Nadia Cannon, 17, says, "A lot of kids are afraid of cops."

In a recent meeting with Portland police officials, she asked Assistant Chief Mark Paresi: "Why do kids who are dressed grungy get picked up for truancy—yet I never have been?"

Says Rudd: "Young folks who stick out, don't dress mainstream or middle class, are targeted by the police."

Rudd calls this "adultist enforcement" and defines adultism as "the systematic and institutionalized oppression of youth and young adults by those who are older or who are perceived as older because of the way they present themselves, such as in manner of dress and speaking style."

But Monette says: "The police department wants them to report any crimes they see in progress. Is that unreasonable? I'd really like to see youth take responsibility for their community in partnership with the law. If these are laws that affect youth, this is not where you change them."

That notion is not unreasonable to Terrence King, 18, an organizer for Rainbow, a multicultural peer support and activity group for gay, trans, bisexual, lesbian and questioning youths.

"Getting youth is no problem," King says, adding that he could come up with 10 youths right now who would be interested in joining the foot patrol.



But, while he would feel responsible to report a crime in progress, King says he would be leery of reporting, say, a drug deal.

That's why, Paresi says, each foot patrol will have six to eight people. He says with the same group working together, camaraderie will develop and the sense of fear will dissolve.

At his request, Paresi recently met with Rudd, King, Cannon and Monette, and talked for two and a half hours about what can be done to make youths feel heard via the roundtable.

Because the foot patrol is the offspring of the roundtable, Rudd believes issues need to be addressed there before youths will feel safe working with the police on the foot patrol.

And, says Rudd, several constituencies are missing from the roundtable: youth, people of color, people in the sex industry, the homeless and the working class. These are the people who are most affected by the police, Rudd says, and they are not represented.

Rudd encourages the bureau and roundtable to examine who is not present at the meetings and figure out why.

Rudd adds that there are four elements that may alienate potential attendees: the time roundtable meetings are held (noon on a weekday); the gathering's structure; bureaucratic jargon; and a sense of tokenizing.

During the recent meeting with Rudd et al., Paresi responded: "We're dependent upon your help in introducing these people. We need help with the intros. When the police have reached out to the minority groups, they have been unsuccessful."

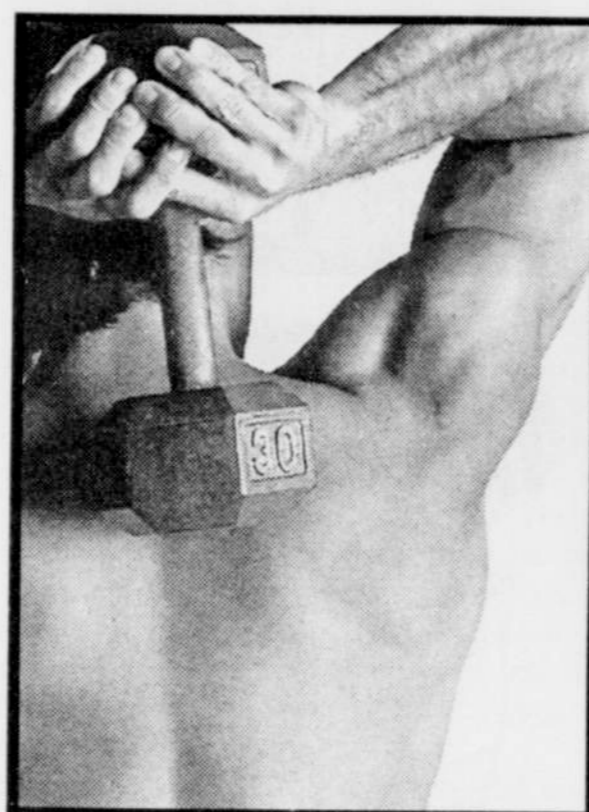
Paresi then offered to bring the police to youths in a space of the young people's choosing.

King, meanwhile, agreed to arrange a meeting in January with Rainbow.

Cannon asked Paresi if the officers would come in plain clothes and leave their guns and clubs at home.

No problem, Paresi responded, "We wear jeans, too."

■ For more information about the CITIZENS FOOT PATROL program, call (503) 295-9785 or contact Pam Monette at (503) 940-5373.



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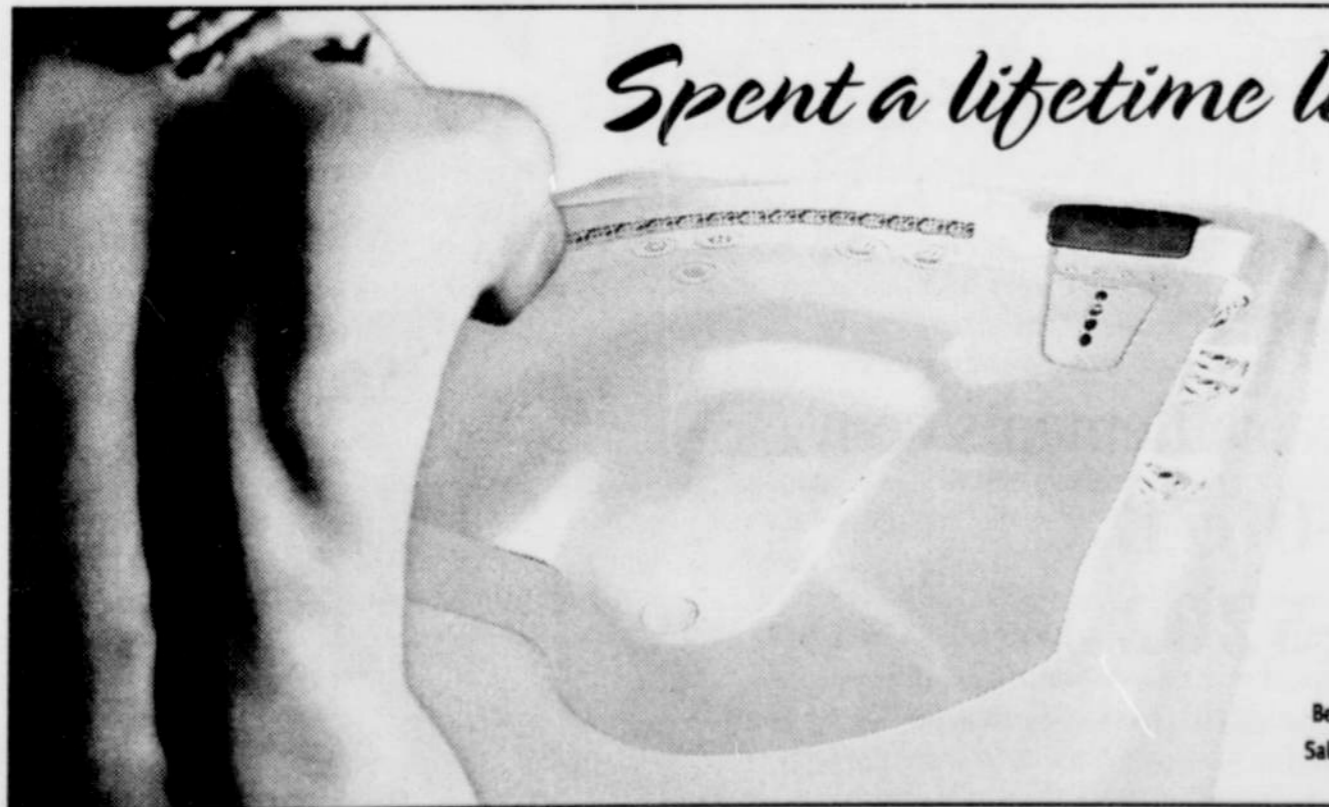
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