

CELEBRATING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

Get inspired by these volunteers who know something about giving back

BY JONATHAN KIPP

Perhaps you're someone who has always intended to volunteer your time and talents, but you just haven't found the right opportunity. Maybe you've seen volunteers marching joyfully in the pride parade and you're just a tad bit envious of the niche each has found. It can be easy to allow months and even years to pass by while waiting for the perfect organization to present itself.

In the meantime, people everywhere are quietly making a difference. These are people we really admire, and we secretly wonder if they will win a higher floor in heaven. So, if you want to make a difference by volunteering and don't know where to start, peruse these organizations and see if there isn't something you can contribute to the queer community.

As a way of showcasing each group, Just Out has profiled a volunteer from each one. These people are not getting awards or attending a lot of black-tie affairs, but they do show up and do the work in front of them. They don't fancy themselves changing the world much at all.

But they do. One hour at a time.



PINK FLAMINGOS

Provides year-round wild, campy, queer fun that raises money to benefit organizations in the queer community. Needs volunteers for Feb. 25 bingo extravaganza and future outrageous events. Contact: (503) 233-5484, www.xjs.com/pf

Melissa Arnold

Who better to be one of the Pink Flamingos than someone who used to care for the colorful birds?

Melissa Arnold volunteers for the zany group and believes in what the Flamingos do for the community.

"It is a social group that is doing community work," she says.

The Flamingos produce fund-raising events and provide a fun, social component to sometimes-serious issues. Arnold thinks that raising money in this manner is a positive way to operate.

Arnold's energy to do volunteer work comes from the people with whom she's in contact: "They are great people," she says of the other Flamingos and those who attend the events.

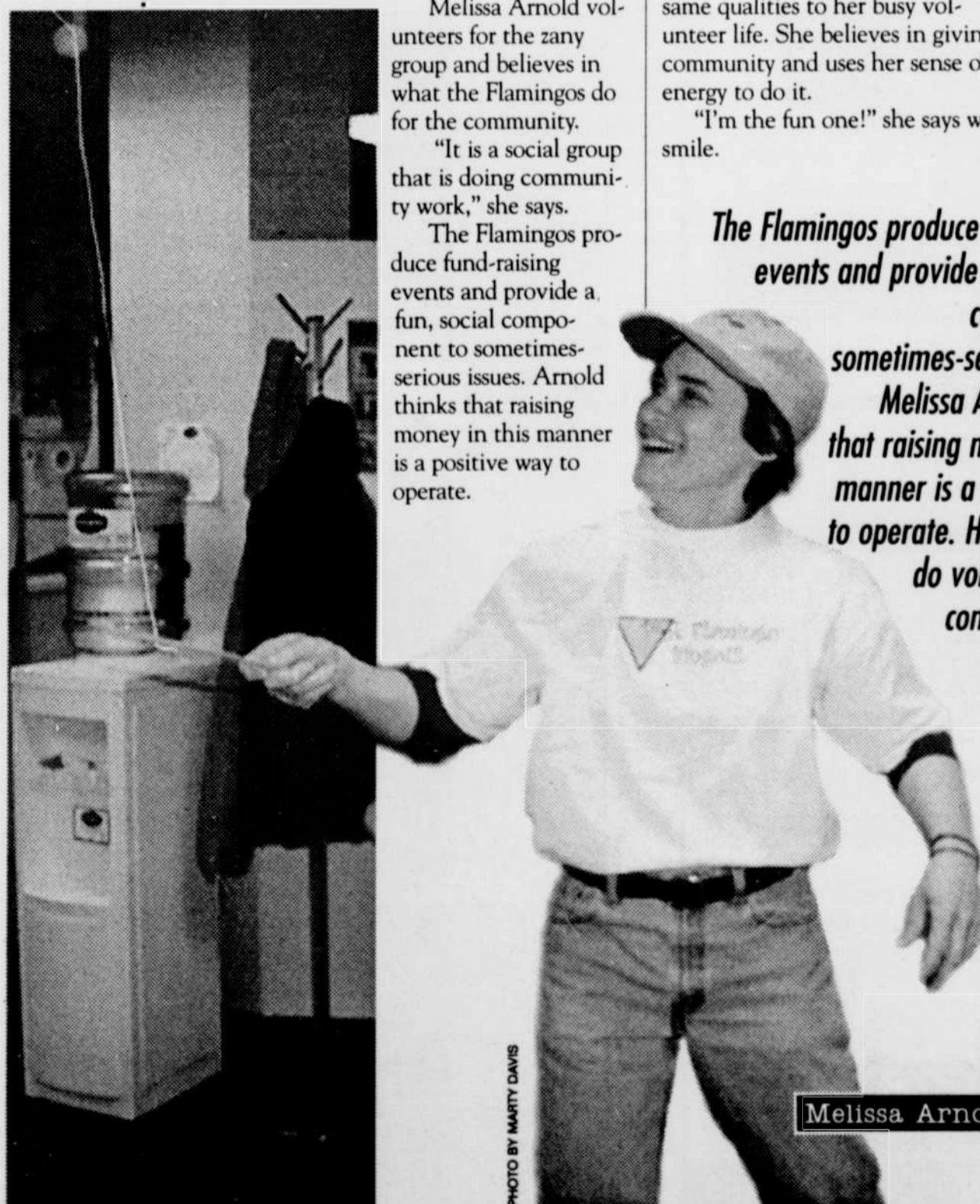
She also volunteers with Bowling for Rhinos and is a coach for a Hawaiian outrigger canoe team.

Arnold solicits donations for the Pink Flamingos, helps do "whatever" at events and serves as one of the group's biggest cheerleaders. Once described as "compact, quick and agile," by a reporter writing about her work at the Oregon Zoo, Arnold brings the same qualities to her busy volunteer life. She believes in giving back to the community and uses her sense of humor and energy to do it.

"I'm the fun one!" she says with an impish smile.

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Melissa Arnold



Jim Bean



OUR HOUSE OF PORTLAND

A residential care facility for those living with and dying from AIDS. Needs volunteers for a wide array of service opportunities. Contact: (503) 234-0175

Jim Bean

While Jim Bean believes it is important for him to help out in the gay community, he sees a larger picture.

"It's just human beings helping human beings," he says about his weekly stint at Our House, a 10-bed home-like facility for people with AIDS.

Bean usually washes dishes during his weekly visit to the hospice, but "sometimes it's just sitting with someone," he explains, referring to the periodic need for volunteers to provide companionship for people who are getting close to death.

Bean says his friends sometimes suspect his volunteerism at Our House is horribly depressing, but he claims it is not.

"Everybody needs to, in some way or fashion, find some way to give back somewhere. Even if it is just being nice to the people next door."

—Jim Bean

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