

NATURAL RESOURCES Continued from Page 21

WRITE AROUND PORTLAND

Places volunteers in community centers to facilitate weekly writing workshops with underrepresented groups, communities and populations. Needs workshop facilitators, board members, accountants, child care providers, office assistants, people willing to hang flyers, solicit donations and help with fundraising events. Contact: (503) 232-2246, lizwrap@aol.com

Vicki Reitenauer



Vicki Reitenauer

Thanks to Write Around Portland, Vicki Reitenauer is able to share her passion for writing with others. The unusual group places volunteers in Portland's community centers to facilitate weekly writing workshops. The goal is to serve people who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity for such a learning experience.

Reitenauer worked with six writers last autumn. All had HIV and/or AIDS. The experience has changed her and helped her to "get out of a box that I think I was probably in," she says.

Working with people with chronic illnesses has been a deeply intense and emotional experience, Reitenauer says.

"I couldn't live in the same level of denial when I was working with this group," she adds. While her role as the workshop facilitator is part team leader and part teacher, Reitenauer also serves as confidante.

"This helped me to appreciate really deeply the stories and the histories each person in the group brought and shared," she says.

Not ordinarily in the company of a lot of guys, Reitenauer believes the experience of working with these men is priceless. She volunteers her time, but says she really doesn't separate work from volunteering.

"It is always about the work. I'm really called by the work," she explains.



SEXUAL MINORITY YOUTH RECREATION CENTER

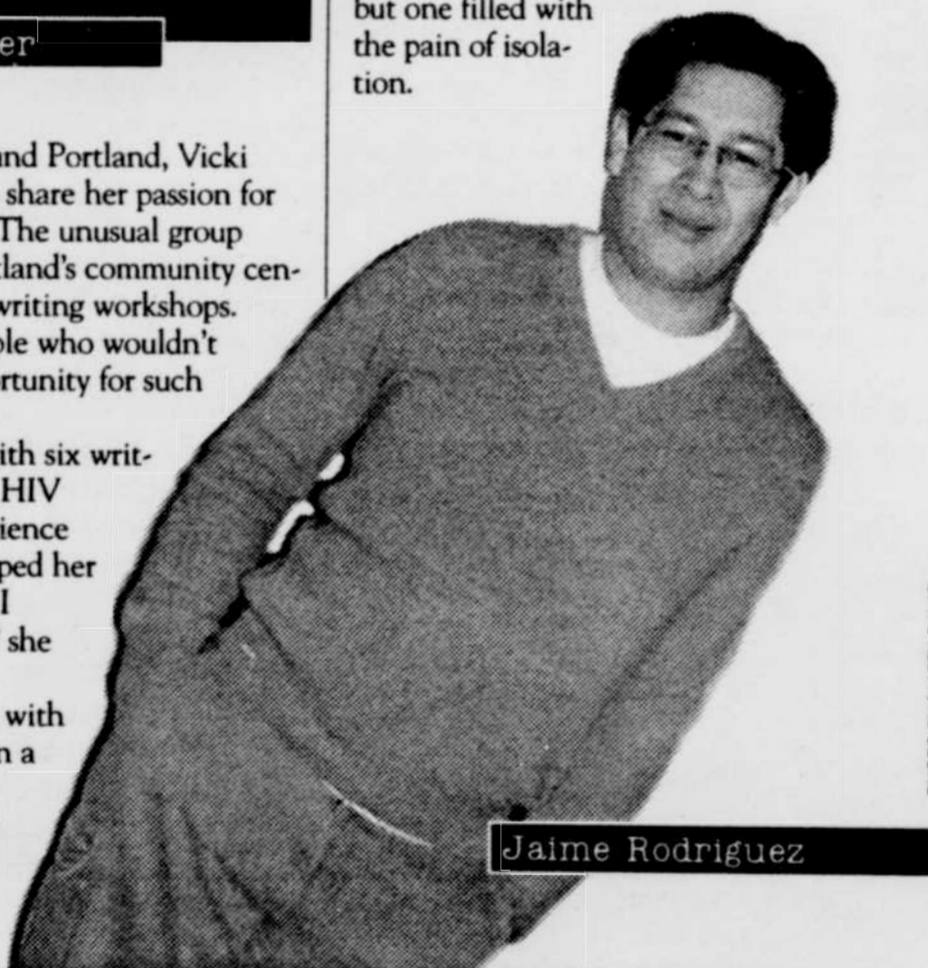
An informal place to hang out; offers drop-in computer access, pool tables and support groups.

Needs board member applicants, center volunteers (particularly transgender and people of color).

Contact: (503) 872-9664, www.smyrc.org

Jaime Rodriguez

As a young, gay Latino man who grew up in a small Oregon town, Jaime Rodriguez knows what it feels like to be an outcast. It was a time of great closeness with his family, but one filled with the pain of isolation.



Jaime Rodriguez

Today Rodriguez tries to make things better for teens. Each week he shows up at the Sexual Minority Youth Recreation Center and supervises the youths who drop in. He is supposed to be a role model, he says, but he's still uncomfortable with that expectation.

"Mostly I just talk to them and try to be their friend," he says.

"I believe in change, but I know we have to participate," Rodriguez adds. "I'm trying to be part of the change."

Volunteering is one of the many ways Rodriguez is working toward that end. In addition to helping SMYRC, Rodriguez helps organize meetings for Somos Orgullo Latino, a social support group for young Latino men.

Speaking with the youth is the best part of his job, Rodriguez says.

"Once you establish somewhat of a relationship, or trust, when they come and talk to you, that is the reward," he says.



Roni



NORTHWEST GENDER ALLIANCE

Social and support organization for cross-dressers, transsexuals and intersexed people, regardless of sexual orientation. Needs anyone interested in participating and helping with events and meetings. Contact: (503) 646-2802, nwga@teleport.com, www.teleport.com/~nwga

Roni

When Roni retired in 1984 from a career in the high-tech field, she was cross-dressing at night and window shopping when stores were closed, she says. She felt alone.

Today, with years of self-discovery, activism and volunteering under her belt, Roni makes sure those in similar circumstances can talk to someone. Roni answers the hot line for the Northwest Gender Alliance in her suburban home.

While acknowledging the strong internal push to find another way of life that many callers express, Roni is well aware of the pain that such decisions can bring to individuals and their families.

"I try not to encourage them. I give them the ins and outs, the good and the bad," Roni says. "They need to know the bad part, too."

Roni recommends that callers talk to counselors, call crisis hot lines if necessary, or come to the alliance's meetings for camaraderie and friendship.

The alliance was founded in the early '80s with only a few people interested in cross-dressing. Roni says thousands have participated in the group since its inception.

She speaks on college campuses, participates in symposiums and now sits on a commission that is preparing material on transgender issues to be used in diversity training for police officers.

While Roni continues to give back to her community, she makes it clear she gets something for herself as well.

"I enjoy the volunteering, because it not only makes my life easier, but it makes it more comfortable for me to be out there," she explains, referring to the increased visibility of transgender people.



DAILY BREAD EXPRESS

Delivers meals to people with HIV and AIDS, sponsored by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. Needs volunteers for various positions. Contact: (503) 460-3822

Mark Rosenberg

One week last month, Mark Rosenberg, a volunteer for Daily Bread Express, made carrot cake for nearly 70 people. "Tomorrow it may be 45 sandwiches," the six-year veteran chuckles.


After seeing the volunteer job announcement to deliver meals to homebound people with HIV/AIDS, he made the call.

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