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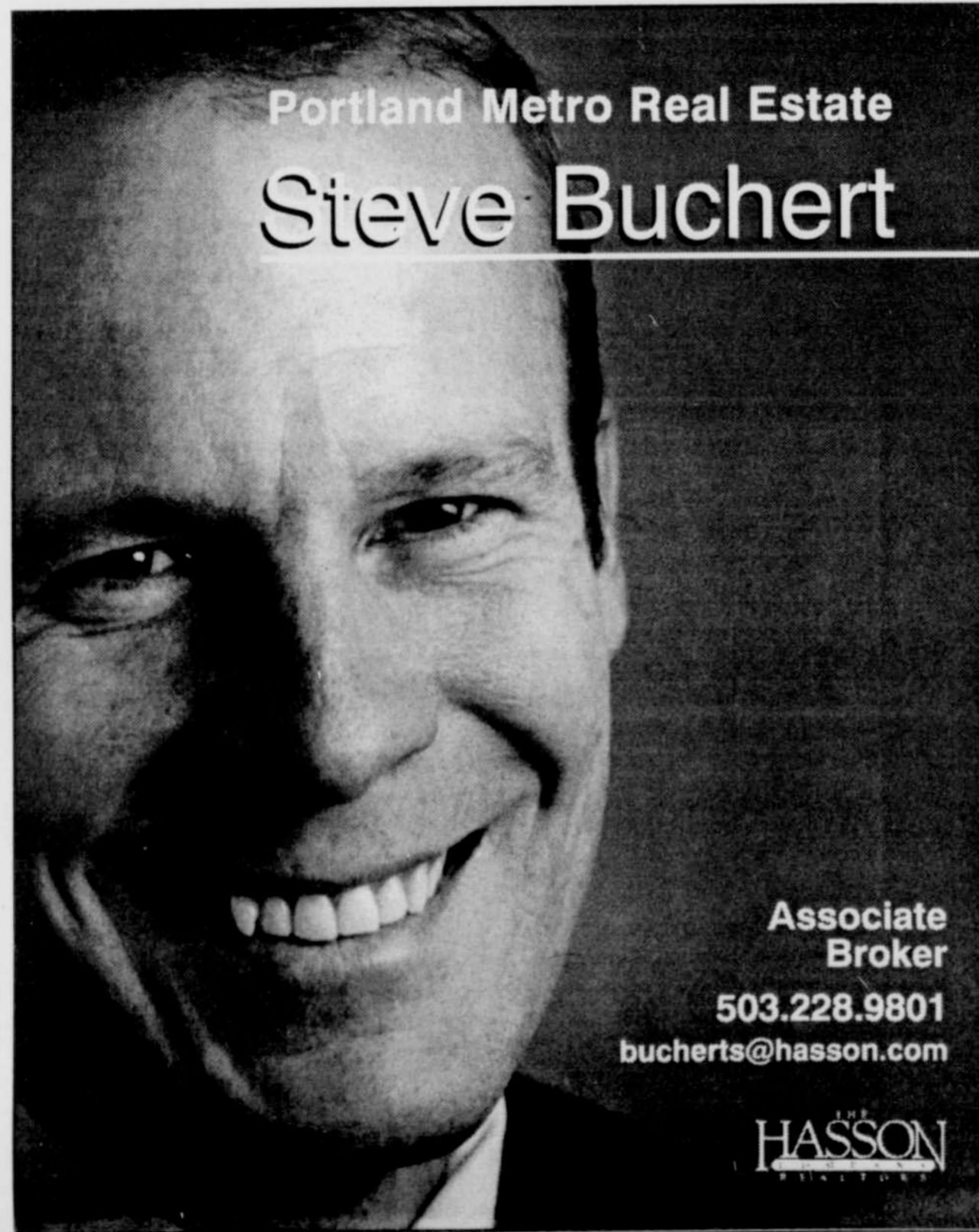


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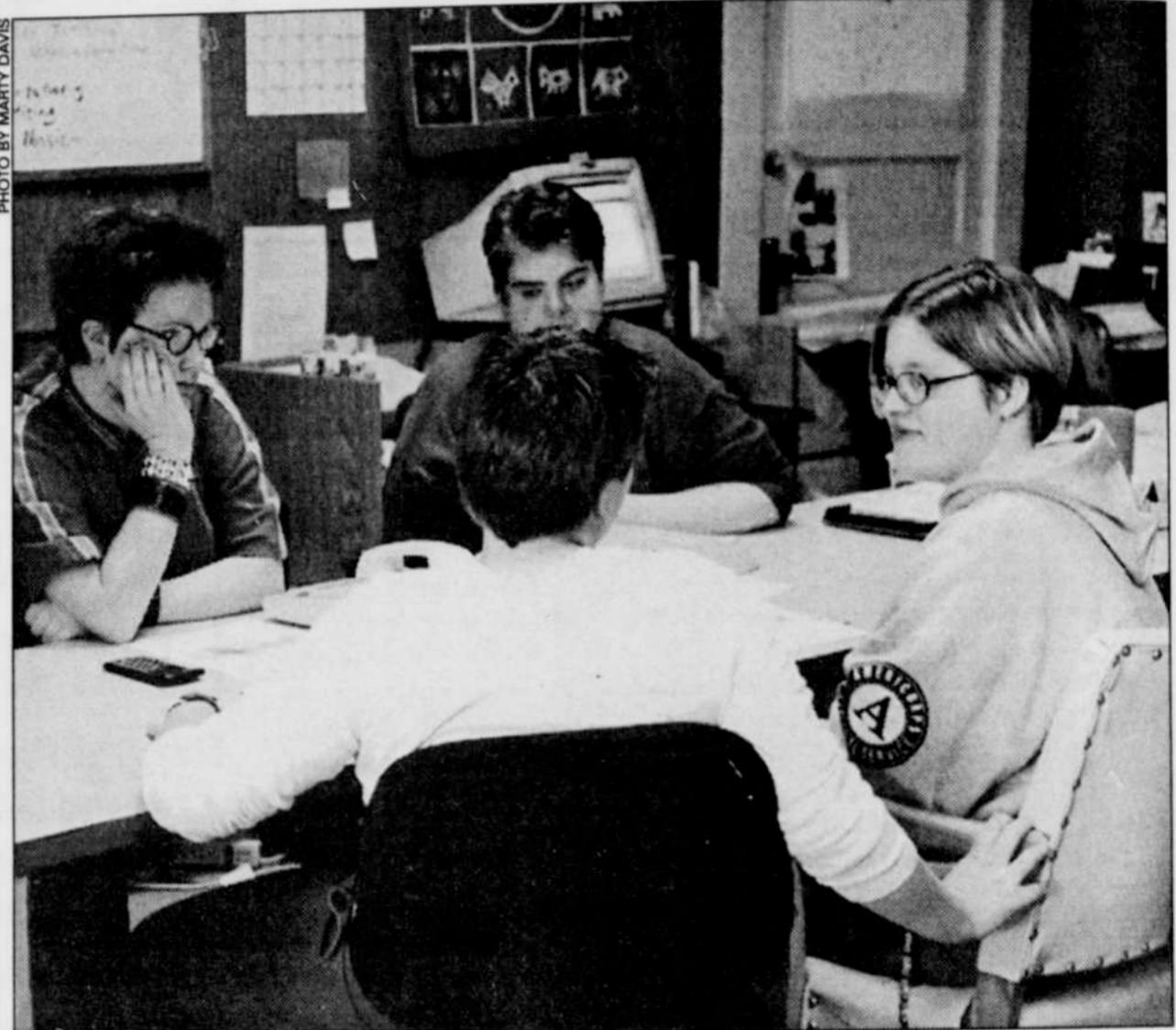
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## NORTHWEST news

# SHOUT IT OUT

Queer youth et al. are encouraged to speak out  
at upcoming YouthNet Town Hall by Katy Davidson



Clockwise from left: Ciara, YouthNet coordinator Mel Rudd, Sarah Barnard and Stephanie Perron are helping develop an agenda for the sexual minority youth services network

In the office of YouthNet, nestled above the outstretched waiting areas of Portland's funky Union Station, you'll find a busy jumble of flyers, resource guides, lists and brainstorming notes. Appropriately enough, the sexual minority youth services network's current agenda is a pretty accurate reflection of the lively space.

YouthNet, which began operating two summers ago, already has its hands full with regularly scheduled activities, such as youth council meetings and various high school projects, but network participants have recently been throwing attention toward two upcoming events: a Town Hall in February and an anti-racism training poised for April.

Mel Rudd, YouthNet's coordinator, says the idea for the Town Hall originated when the network first began operating. The purpose of the event is to pull together queer youths, service providers and allies and get them to shout out their frustrations—and possible solutions.

"We're going to get together, have a lot of food, maybe an open mike or something, and just have a brainstorming session about what people want," Rudd explains. "We want to get stuff down on paper."

Nadia Cannon, one of YouthNet's high-school-age interns, is convinced the Town Hall will be anything but boring.

"We want this to be big and huge and fun," she tells *Just Out*.

Rudd says the goal of the Town Hall, which is slated for Feb. 26, is to take everyone's ideas and turn them into YouthNet's needs and services plan.

"We can start to create a vision on paper of what we want to do," says Rudd, who'd like to see the development of a centralized place for queer youths to call if they run into trouble.

"A big red flag came up on my screen when I got four crisis calls in one week and we didn't have people to respond right away," Rudd says, adding that a crisis line may actually be devel-

oped with resources that are already in place.

"We're not creating new services as much as we're trying to improve existing services," Rudd says.

Anti-racism training is also on the network's horizon. The seminar is a collaborative effort with two local service organizations, Rainbow and Bradley-Angle House, and is tentatively scheduled to take place at Portland State University in early April.

Amid these larger events, there is a web of activity that keeps YouthNet moving on a daily basis. Among other involvements, Rudd says, the network is busy trying to make the Portland Police Bureau's Sexual Minorities Roundtable more accessible to youths and working with the Streetlight Youth Shelter to help develop awareness of trans issues.

"I can't stress how excited I am about that," Rudd says.

Like many other nonprofit organizations, however, YouthNet's vision is somewhat constrained by funding.

Rudd says the network gets enough money from Multnomah County to pay the coordinator for 25 hours per work week, fund some events and keep the office up and running.

"The county only partially covers us; we're always looking to other sources for funding," Rudd says. "We have two incredible interns working for us, but we can only pay them a small stipend."

■ YouthNet's TOWN HALL will be held at 6 p.m. Feb. 26 at the Quaker Meeting House, 4312 S.E. Stark St. in Portland. All queer youths and their allies are encouraged to attend.

To learn more about YOUTHNET programs, send an e-mail to [pdxyouthnet@hotmail.com](mailto:pdxyouthnet@hotmail.com) or call (503) 227-1981.

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