

A milestone birthday is generally cause for a little introspection and celebration. Bradley-Angle House's 25th anniversary is no different, except that the "never thought we'd get this old" comments don't come with a cheerful chuckle.

The Portland-based Bradley-Angle House grew out of the Prescott House, which started in 1971 as a shelter primarily for women leaving prison. Sharon Bradley and Pam Angle were two of the first residents there. In 1975, Bradley-Angle House became one of the first shelters for battered women in the United States. The world's first had opened in England just two years earlier.

According to Executive Director Erika Silver, many of the house's founders believed it would be obsolete and unneeded by now.

A recent report released by a coalition of Multnomah County agencies shows that, to the contrary, one in seven local women ages 18 to 64 was physically abused by a partner during the past year.

Demand for more shelter space has placed a new facility at the top of Bradley-Angle's birthday wish list. Today, it is not only serving more women but a more diverse group of women.

Queer women have always been involved in Bradley-Angle House, according to staffers, and the programs have evolved over time to better serve women from queer communities.

"Many of the founders were working-class dyke feminists," says Jody Anderson, Bradley-Angle's sexual minority services coordinator.

But when some folks in the organization started the Battered Lesbian Support Group in the mid-1980s, they did so amid serious grumbling from other staffers, board members and volunteers—despite the fact that anti-homophobia training had been in place for some time, says Anderson.

At the time, homophobia was a widespread problem in the anti-domestic violence movement, Silver explains, and included pressures from funders and denial that women could be abusers. While that denial is still an obstacle, the support group has survived and evolved.

Now Bradley-Angle's services, including the shelter facility, are open to all self-identified women. Staff and volunteers receive anti-oppression training that includes unlearning homophobia.

TURNING 25

Bradley-Angle House reaches the quarter-century mark by Irene K. Hislop

Women seeking services go through a phone screening that also covers oppression issues. If a woman expresses homophobia during the conversation, Anderson explains, volunteers would rather try to educate her than deny her services. But oppressive behavior is not tolerated in the shelter.

Bradley-Angle offers motel vouchers for women escaping violence who might feel uncomfortable or unsafe in the shelter. The drawback of using vouchers is that women in motels do not have as much contact with case-workers and other support networks as they would in the shelter.

When the lesbian group started it was just

Anderson says.

Currently she is busy updating outreach materials for queer women. Outreach is also happening for a new queer youth group at Bradley-Angle open to all genders.

In 1992, Bradley-Angle House began to work with the SM community to confront stereotypes that confused SM practices with abuse. Anderson notes that SM groups have been solid financial supporters of the shelter.

and transgender individuals experiencing or escaping domestic violence.

One day, Courvant, herself a trans woman and abuse survivor, picked up an anti-domestic violence flier that listed a variety of identifications, including transsexual.

"I was floored in both a flattered and worried way," she recalls.

While she was delighted to see Bradley-Angle reaching out to the trans community, she was also concerned it lacked the information and resources to serve trans women.

Shortly after that, she and Travers did a training with Bradley-Angle staff and volunteers. Courvant is now working as an on-call case manager with the shelter.

"Education still needs to happen," Courvant says, "so people notice the little things. It's not going to happen all at once. This is ongoing work."

The basics of that work range from creating inclusive policies to updating mundane forms to making sure women understand shelter services in enough detail to decide what their best options are.

In late September, Bradley-Angle organizers are planning an event to celebrate how far they have come in that ongoing work, and to honor those who have made it possible.

But the statistics are still grim. According to Silver, Bradley-Angle has to turn away nine out of every 10 women seeking shelter. And the recent Multnomah County report states that in that county alone 28,000 women were physically abused by their partners during the last year.

But there is good news as well. Bradley-Angle recently received funding from Multnomah County that can be used for sexual minority services. It has also received a grant from the Equity Foundation. And the search for a new facility is in full swing.

"[Turning 25] is a pretty big accomplishment," says Silver. "The cycle of violence really has been broken in a lot of people's lives, and Bradley-Angle has been a catalyst for that."

■ IRENE HISLOP is a Portland-based free-lance writer.



Bradley-Angle House Executive Director Erika Silver



Bradley-Angle House queer staffers (clockwise from top left) Gabby Santos, Erika Silver, Jeannie LaFrance, Lauren Martin, Jody Anderson, Diana Courvant, Crystal Query, Jodi Darby, Amy Catania, Molly Franks and Megan Savage

that—women had to identify specifically as lesbians to participate. Eventually, a bisexual caucus formed and lobbied for inclusion. Now the group is open to all women battered by women. "We're headed in the right direction,"

In 1998, Bradley-Angle House began work to provide services to trans women. That was about a year after Diana Courvant and Derrick Travers started the Survivor Project to raise awareness of the needs and issues of transsexual

in a lot of people's lives, and Bradley-Angle has been a catalyst for that."

■ IRENE HISLOP is a Portland-based free-lance writer.

You can upack now...



We're the last Realtors you'll ever need.

Make Bender Properties your real estate home. Put your feet up and relax! Details are our business. You won't lift a finger as we attend to every aspect of buying or selling your home—even the little chores that others sweep under the rug. And successful? When it comes to fresh marketing or resourceful hunting, our enterprising agents really clean house. Complete service and client education are always our priority.

HOME PURCHASE & SALES
INVESTMENT PROPERTY SALES, PURCHASE & MANAGEMENT
LICENSED TAX CONSULTATION

It's ALL in our job description!

bender properties

4133 SE Division Street, "Richmond Place"



503.233.4363

Portland, Oregon 97202