

Just one step remains until "Adam and Steve" can pop the cork on a bottle of champagne and celebrate their...partnership. It might not have the same romance typically associated with love, marriage and wedding bells, but proponents of a partnership registry think this is an important first step.

Multnomah County commissioners voted unanimously July 20 in favor of a proposed ordinance to provide a domestic partnership registry for unmarried couples wanting to formalize their relationships—including same-sex couples.

The vote of approval came on the heels of a final public hearing in Gresham.

Despite expected disfavor from at least some east Multnomah County residents, those who showed up for the community meeting about the proposed domestic partnership registry voiced only support.

"I think it is great," Sam Adams, chief of staff to Portland's Mayor Vera Katz, said about the July 6 meeting. "It's a wonderful surprise."

County Commissioner Serena Cruz, who explained the ordinance and answered questions with her colleague, Lisa Naito, also was pleased with the overwhelming positive feedback and lack of objection.

The Multnomah County Commission and the city of Portland co-sponsored the community meeting in Gresham to give east county residents a convenient opportunity to comment on the proposed ordinance. The two governmental

## COUNTY SAYS, 'I Do'

**After Gresham expresses widespread support, commissioners unanimously approve domestic partnership registry** by Jonathan Kipp

bodies previously heard from residents in other areas of the county but had not held a meeting in east county.

Naito and others thought a meeting in Gresham was necessary. She announced at the meeting that she has a gay brother and that he should have the same rights as anyone else. The registry might be a first step, she said.

Others who showed up to comment had gay family members, as well.

"My son is gay," a middle-aged mother confidently said. She thinks the county's action is important.

The registry came to the agenda when members of the City Council and County Commission saw other cities passing ordinances in late 1999 allowing same-sex partners to register their relationship with local government agencies. Katz assembled a task force to look into the issue as a first step.

Several months later, a proposed ordinance was authored to provide a partnership registry for unmarried couples and received

"unanimous support" from both the city and county voting bodies, Adams said. He explained that the issue of a domestic partnership registry has been discussed during the past few years. Local officials watched Los Angeles, New York City, San Francisco and Seattle implement registries, but the time was never right.

Adams said registry proponents either were concerned about the Oregon Citizens Alliance or because the Legislature was considering important legislation; they wanted to make sure the timing was right for a positive public reaction. "It was more than time to pass this," he admitted.

Jim Van Dyke, deputy city of Portland attorney, said communities in 17 states and 40 cities have domestic partnership registries. Some, including California and Hawaii, have statewide registries for unmarried couples, he said.

Ashland is Oregon's only city offering a domestic partnership registry. At least 23 couples have registered there, Van Dyke said.

The registry has no legal meaning, according to Van Dyke. "At this time, (the registry) is almost completely a symbolic gesture," he said.

Cruz said she was saddened that her gay friends couldn't make the same level of commitment, in the eyes of the government, as everyone else. That's one of the reasons she pioneered the effort.

Despite that, Cruz wanted to make certain the county touched base with everyone in the community before moving forward on the issue—even if it meant facing opposition. But this night, anyone opposing such change had other plans.

"I'm delighted," Cruz said about the positive tone of the meeting.

If the ordinance passes a second vote by the County Commission on July 27, the domestic partnership registry will become official before Sept. 1. Couples will be required to register in person. The registry will become a part of public record.



MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

# Certificate of Domestic Partnership

Certificate No. \_\_\_\_\_

We, The Undersigned, Declare That:

- We are residing together and sharing the common necessities of life.
- Neither of us is married or registered as the domestic partner of another person in any jurisdiction.
- We are both at least 18 years of age.
- We are not related by blood kinship closer than would bar marriage in the State of Oregon and are mentally competent to consent to contract.
- We are each other's sole domestic partner and intend to remain so indefinitely and are responsible for each other's common welfare.

As Domestic Partners formally recognized in this Domestic Partnership we:

1. Agree to file a Statement of Termination of Domestic Partnership Registration, if the partnership is terminated (except by death) or any of the facts set forth above change.
2. Understand that the registration of the Certificate of Domestic Partnership is evidence of a domestic partnership of continuous duration.
3. Affirm that neither of us has filed a Statement of Termination of Domestic Partnership Registration within the last six months.

We do hereby swear or affirm that the information stated above is true and correct to the best of our knowledge.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witnessed by