



PHOENIX FALLING

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What's next?

Despite the demise of Phoenix Rising, services for sexual minorities are as plentiful as ever. Network's Helios Counseling Services will continue offering mental health services to all ages and sexual orientations.

Although Helios will work with clients from all income levels and can accept Medicaid, Medicare and Oregon Health Plan coverage as payment, it will not offer low-income clients a sliding scale. Personnel will assist qualifying individuals with an application to the Oregon Health Plan, which will cover at least some of the mental health services needed. Helios also accepts many private health insurance plans.

But some in the community still will fall through the cracks without Phoenix Rising's sliding scale available to them. Clients without a permanent address or proper identification cannot qualify for the Oregon Health Plan.

Individuals with incomes that exceed the

requirements of the Oregon Health Plan but who cannot afford private insurance or to pay cash will not be able to receive services from Helios. Watson says clients who fall in this "uncovered" category can seek services from those private mental health professionals who still offer a sliding scale.

Network will continue to be a resource for sexual minority seniors but does not currently have any programs in place for this population. However, Watson personally will help direct seniors who are in need of assistance to the proper resources.

She says Network will be looking for \$5,000 to publish a new edition of the Senior Resource Directory early next year. The first edition was published last January with financial support from Equity Foundation, Multnomah County and a private donor.



Kathy Belge says that youth services are vibrant, alive and growing but that more is needed

In addition, the center does not have an outdoor area. Belge thinks youth need a place to get outside to burn up some energy.

Youth questioning their gender also are served by the center. Two evenings a week, an average of eight youths attend a trans support group.

Youth services a priority

The blending of Phoenix Rising's programs and those at Network gives Portland-area youth more centralized services than before.

Roots and Branches, a Network program, will continue to provide case management services to the area's sexual minority youth. The newly formed Vanguard Youth Services will take over management of the Sexual Minority Youth Recreational Center and has outreach programs in Clackamas and Washington counties.

Bridge 13, a youth speaker's bureau to educate the community about sexual minority youth issues, will operate under Vanguard Youth Services.

Kathy Belge, a former case manager at Roots and Branches, recently took over the youth services program manager's duties. She says the Sexual Minority Youth Recreational Center serves as a hub for all of the youth programs.

The facility serves about 500 youths, with 35 to 40 newcomers dropping in every month, according to Belge.

The center, governed by a Youth Steering Committee, is filled with an average of 43 youths on weekdays and more than 70 on weekends.

The goal is to have the capability to offer services to even more youths. The first step is finding a new location; the center, at the east end of the Burnside Bridge in a congested area with substantial traffic noise, needs a building with more space located off a major street.

Youth services are vibrant, alive and growing, Belge and Watson say, but more is needed. The program's hours need to be expanded, counseling services for youth need to grow, drug and alcohol programs need to be launched, and employment issues must be dealt with, Belge says.

In the meantime, the youths need the community's support, money and time. "We'd like to see the queer community come back and volunteer and support us with donations so we can continue to do this good work," Watson says.

The future

Nelson might be sad about the end of Phoenix Rising but says he is hopeful about the future. "I'm very confident that Network will do a great job, and in some ways, services will be much more stable."

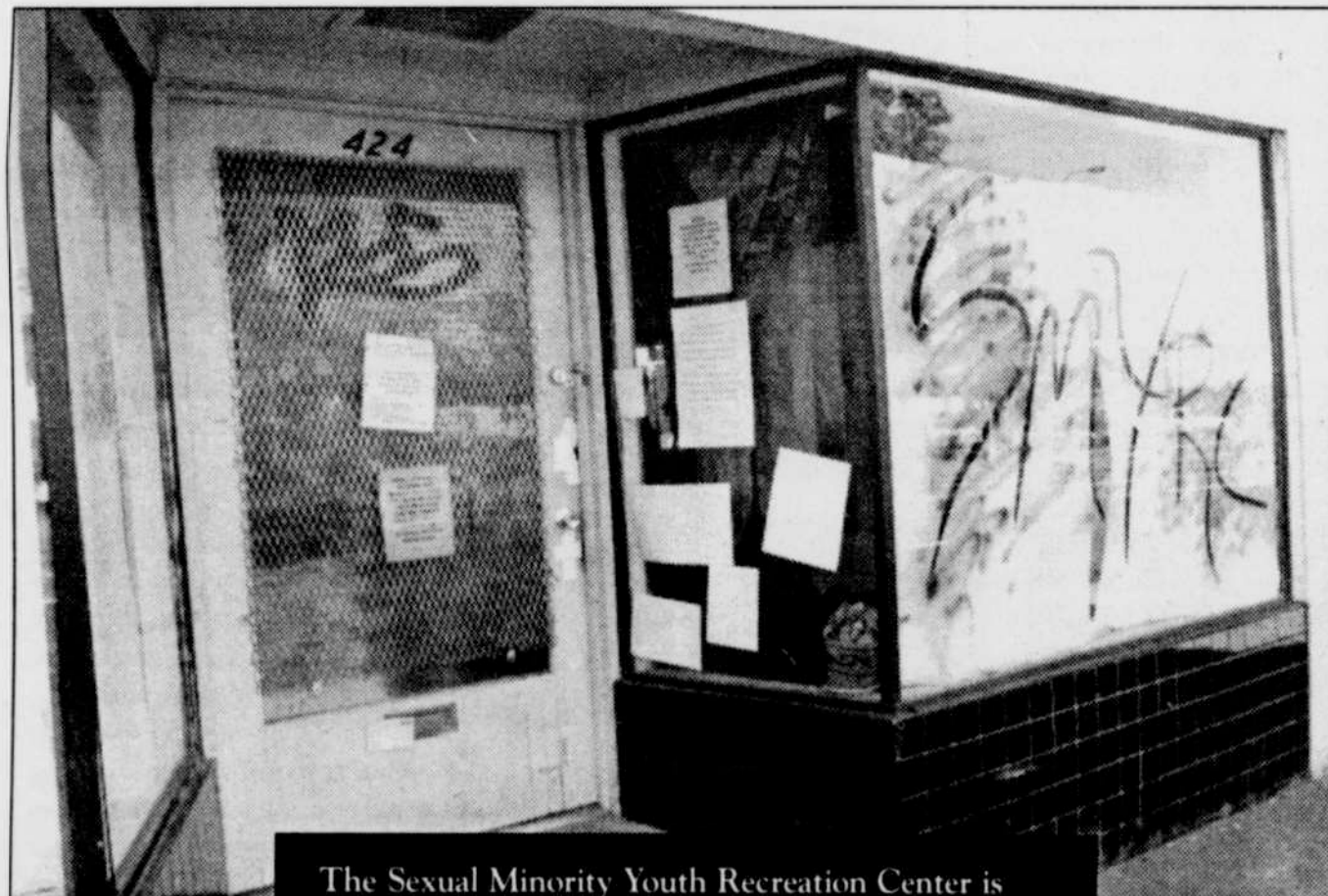
Although Phoenix Rising might be gone from Portland's landscape, the spirit of the organization likely will live on for some time—just like its namesake. **J**

Contact NETWORK BEHAVIORAL HEALTH-CARE INC. at 5415 S.W. Milwaukie Ave. #3, Portland, OR 97202, or (503) 238-0769.

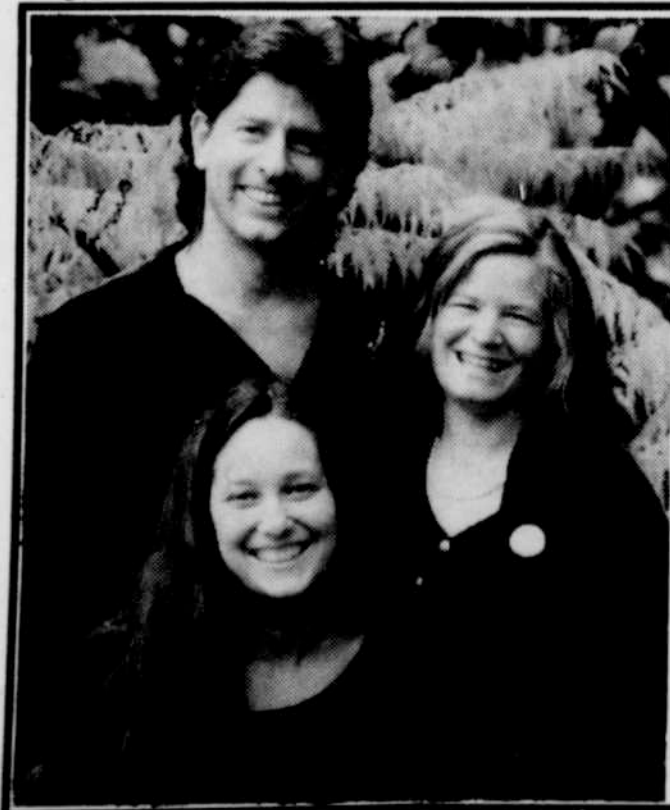
Call HELIOS COUNSELING SERVICES at (503) 238-0780.

For more information about the SEXUAL MINORITY YOUTH RECREATIONAL CENTER, call (503) 872-9664 or visit the Internet site www.smyrc.org.

JONATHAN KIPP is a Just Out staff reporter who can be reached at jkipp@teleport.com.



The Sexual Minority Youth Recreation Center is looking for a new home in a less congested area



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