



PHOTOS BY MARTY DAVIS
Welcoming words speak to passersby

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"We are the Lesbian Community Project," Knightly contended, "and we knew from talking to the community and the surveys that there is a need for a women's organization in Portland."

Aspen added: "We came out of a real need for lesbians to have safe space to celebrate themselves and explore what they can do together, which came out of the women's movement of the '70s.... We're trying to make sure that our organization survives by having it connect its past and its future together. We felt that the best way to do that is to maintain the identity of the lesbian organization."

According to the new bylaws, any woman can be a member. Men can be supportive members but not voting members.

"We went back to the original bylaws almost word for word," Knightly said.

Harrison added, "When they hired Kristan back, they brought faith back into the organization from the women who had founded it because here was a woman who knew where that was coming from." She wants to make it clear, however, that LCP continues to be a diverse and accepting organization.

"What we're trying to do is have an organization that has enough space for everybody to allow people to be different but still allow them to have a common goal of providing a safe space for women," Harrison said. "I don't have to agree with everything everybody says, but I don't want them stepping on me for not agreeing with them. I think that's what LCP is working on, and I'm really proud

of how hard we're working on it."

According to its leaders, regular evidence indicates LCP is useful in the city. The office receives calls every week from women new to Portland or new to the queer community looking for ways to connect. It also acts as a referral service for callers with inquiries such as where to find an appropriate speaker for a seminar, a leader for a workshop or a sensitive health care provider.

The future plans of LCP largely depend on what Aspen refers to as the "community showing its support in a financially concrete way." The organization has not received grant money for operating expenses in two years. It's entirely funded through membership dues, donations and fund-raisers.

"It's very, very important that if we're going to continue to be an organization with a strong lesbian focus that lesbians support the organization," Aspen said. "It's like public broadcasting and KBOO; if you enjoy it, if you listen to it, if you get a benefit from the Lesbian Community Project being visible in the world, you need to support it."

Cohn has strong thoughts on the subject of financial support, including those who might not take a direct part in LCP activities. "We all contribute to our favorite charities not with the thought that I may need it someday but with the thought that there are people out there who need this organization and that the community is a better place for its existence. Support this organization for the benefit of those who need it."

Meghan Garrity, who does the layout and design of the LCP newsletter and assisted at the most recent youth camp, told this story: "I was talking to a 15-year-old about her coming out. When she was first realizing that she might be a lesbian, she didn't have anyone to talk to, she didn't know anybody at school; it was just a very secret, private thing that she was going through. She said that every day she rode the bus and passed LCP, and every day she looked at it and felt better, like 'I'm not the only one.'"

Aspen gets a little misty. "We're basically building community, and we've been doing that for a long time." **JM**

Stop by the LESBIAN COMMUNITY PROJECT office at 1001 E. Burnside St. or call 503-233-3913. Memberships are on a sliding scale. LCP's newsletter, On Track, can be picked up at Portland bookstores and queer venues.

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