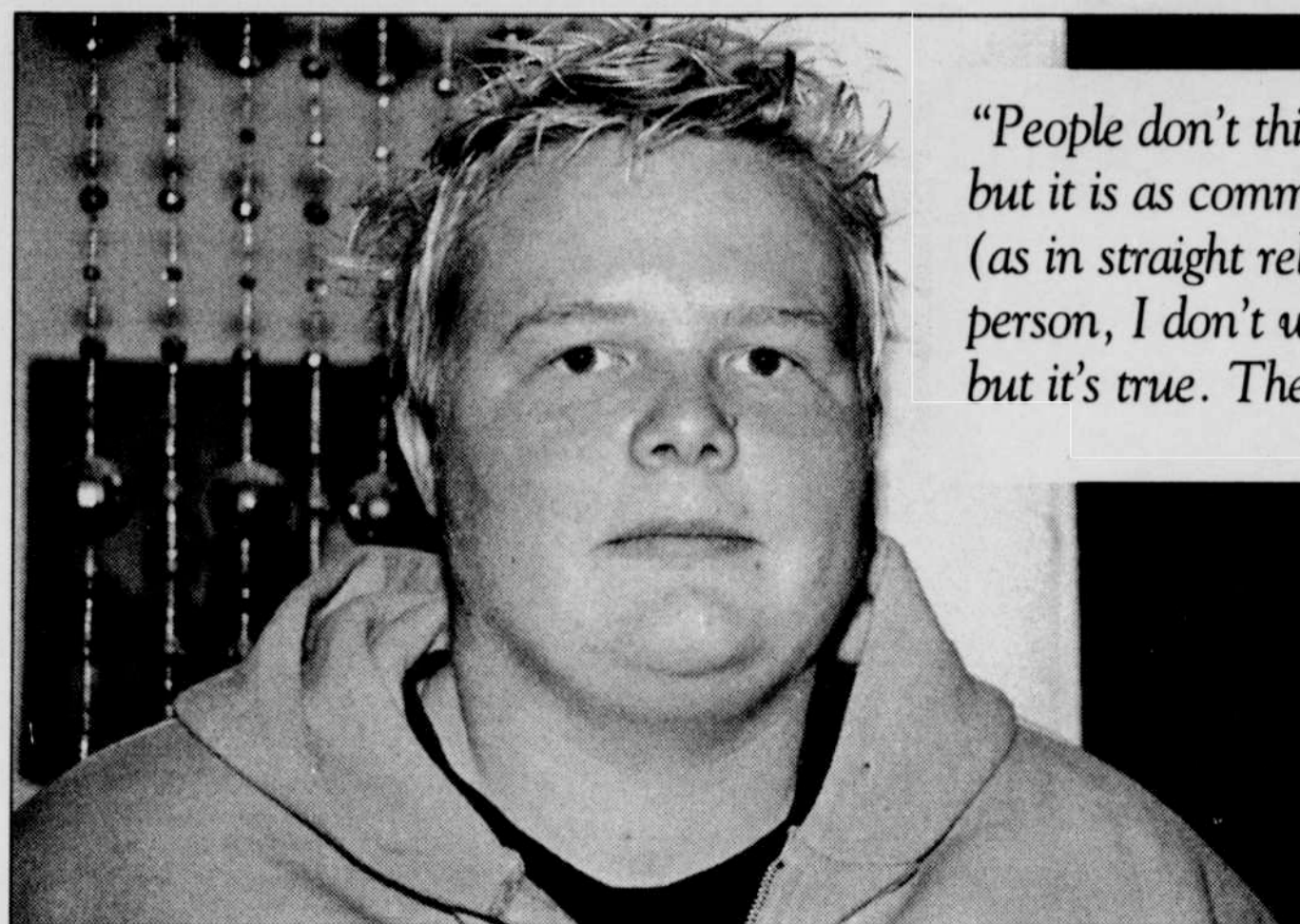




"People don't think it happens, but it is as common in queer relationships (as in straight relationships). As a queer person, I don't want to even say that, but it's true. The word needs to get out."

— Roper

"All we can do is invite people to reflect on how they can live more freely and wholesomely," Stofft says. "Nobody needs to accept verbal, emotional, financial, spiritual, mental or physical abuse." **in**

Note: Some of the names used in this story have been changed to ensure protection and privacy.

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



remorse and quicker to make a bad situation better. The victims think the situation will improve, so they stay.

The most important thing for survivors to recognize is that there is a way to get out of the relationship safely and to heal, Stofft says. "They can protect themselves in the future."

The Community Responds

Although services need to be increased for victims and batterers, more education about domestic violence might be the first step in addressing the epidemic. "People are unaware," Hale says. Even professionals who work in the field of domestic violence often don't understand the issues of same-sex couples.

Roper says the gay community itself doesn't see the problem as a priority, either. One reason, he says, is the gay community doesn't want to make itself look bad.

"People don't think it happens, but it is as common in queer relationships (as in straight relationships)," Roper says. "As a queer person, I don't want to even say that, but it's true. The word needs to get out."

Some say denial of domestic violence is even deeper in the gay and lesbian community than in society in general. "Some guys are in the relationship and don't even know they are battered," Stofft says.

Many gay men see themselves as less aggressive than heterosexual men; others see themselves as more evolved than their heterosexual

counterparts, one study suggests. Many lesbians have bought into the myth that domestic violence requires a male batterer, fighting to maintain the myth of a "lesbian utopia" where all violence is caused by men, the study says.

That frustrates professionals who work with domestic violence survivors. "It's nothing for the gay community to be ashamed of," Stofft says. "It is not a gay issue; it is a cultural issue."

Like other services for sexual minorities, services for domestic violence especially are needed in rural areas and for communities of color and youth. Today, white women utilize most services, Roper says.

Despite some services for batterers and victims in same-sex relationships, most say the metropolitan area has too few services. Services for gay, bi and trans men particularly are lacking.

To address part of that need, Stofft is interested in starting a group for gay, bisexual and trans men who have survived domestic violence. He hopes to partner with a reputable agency to help sponsor the group. Because the endeavor has no financing, Stofft says the group will utilize volunteers and likely will meet in a church where everyone can feel safe.

For many survivors, support groups provide the first step to getting out of a violent relationship. They are important to get individuals educated about how to proceed with their lives in a healthy way, Stofft says. He says support groups can help people develop skills and a safety plan for themselves.

In the end, though, ending domestic violence requires victims reaching out for help.

LOCAL RESOURCES

- **Portland Women's Crisis Line:** 503-235-5333 or 888-235-5333.
- **Bradley-Angle House:** 503-232-7805 or 503-289-6869, ext. 11.
- **Helios Counseling:** 503-238-0780.
- **Family Center Outreach Office:** 503-771-5503.
- **Battered Lesbian Support Group:** 503-232-9751.
- **Survivorship Project** (for trans/intersex survivors): 503-288-3191.
- **Lesbian Community Project:** 503-282-8090.
- **Portland Police Sexual Minority Crisis Response Team:** 503-823-2095 or 503-823-4293.
- **Portland Police Domestic Violence Reduction Unit:** 503-823-0961.
- **Men's Resource Center:** 503-235-3433.
- **Roots and Branches** (for youth): 503-238-0780.
- **Clackamas Women's Crisis Line:** 503-654-2288.
- **Washington County Domestic Violence Hotline:** 503-640-1171.
- **Rape Crisis Center:** 503-640-5311.
- **Shelter Domestic Violence Resource Center:** 503-640-1171 (TTY and voice).
- **Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans and Lesbian Survivors of Abuse:** 206-547-8191.
- **Advocates for Abused and Battered Lesbians:** 206-547-8191.

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