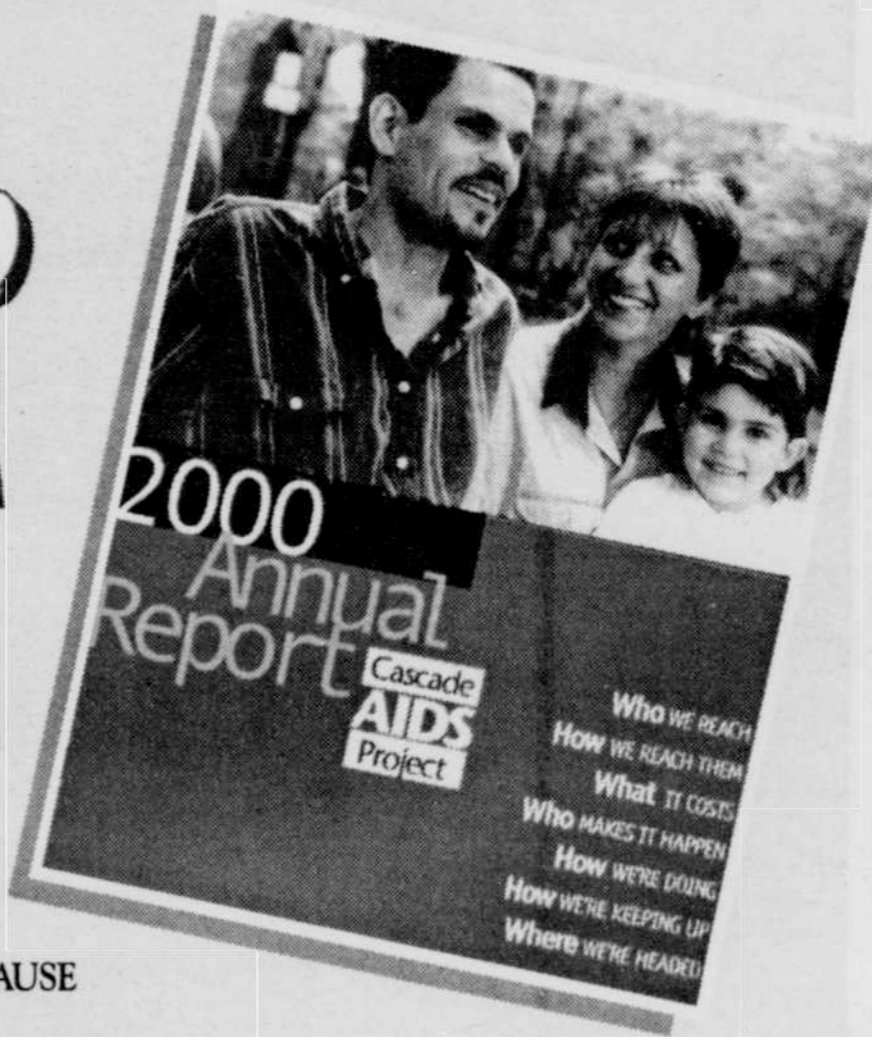


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HEALTHIER, WEALTHIER AND WISER

Greatest need, riskiest behavior
sum up CAP's bottom line BY TIMOTHY KRAUSE

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Rebel with a cause

Portland teen takes on
the federal government

BY JONATHAN KIPP

Emma Rood is in the throes of a very big story, especially for a 15-year-old. Her purple hair and trendy black eyeglasses likely help her fit in at her Southwest Portland high school. But this is no ordinary teen-ager.

She is bright and articulate and wise beyond her years. If nothing else, the gregarious sophomore is braver than most adults.

Rood is suing the federal government. "Emma Rood vs. the United States of America," she says with almost every one of her newly de-braced teeth showing.

She is not the alone, though. She and a group of plaintiffs from coast to coast are suing the government to challenge a new law forcing libraries to censor online information.

They say the recently passed Children's Internet Protection Act, which goes into effect April 20, censors constitutionally protected free speech, a slippery slope for the First Amendment. If upheld by the courts, the law would require all libraries receiving federal funding to use Internet filtering software on all of their online computers or risk losing that money.

The American Civil Liberties Union made the lawsuit public March 20, when Rood and her fellow plaintiffs held a press conference on the steps of Central Library downtown. Multnomah County Library is the lead plaintiff.

Experts anticipate the case eventually will go before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The ACLU's Chris Hansen, a senior staff attorney in New York City, had been looking for library patrons to join the lawsuit when he found out about Rood. She used public libraries for almost all her life.

She also understood and appreciated the issues of free speech and intellectual freedom. Her mother, Joanna, is director of the library system in Clackamas County, so she picked up a thing or two about the importance of books and access to information.

What Hansen didn't know about the potential litigant was the compelling story she would tell him that would make her "the perfect plaintiff."



Emma Rood

PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS



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