

justout

The IN publication for the OUT population

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FEATURE

HEALTHIER, WEALTHIER AND WISER: Greatest need, riskiest behavior sum up CAP's bottom line
p 26

NEWS

NORTHWEST • That hits the spot
pp 6-19

NATIONAL • Church chat
pp 20-21

WORLD • Welcome to gay Paree
pp 22-25

ENTERTAINMENT

THEATER • No wonder they win awards
p 39

MUSIC • Sing out, Diane
p 41

DANCE • A bird named Barney
p 43

BOOKS • New releases for voyeurs and Oz fans
pp 46-47

ART • History and art combine beautifully
p 48

DIVERSIONS • Rufus and Tret, Tony and Jodie
p 49

COLUMNS

MS. BEHAVIOR • Setting a poor guy straight
p 35

OUT LOUD • Tales from fraternity and sorority row
p 40

OUTWORD • Personal power outages
p 45

SPECIAL

EATING OUT • Let someone else cook tonight
pp 38-39

NIGHTSPOTS • Gay-friendly hangouts
p 46

JUST FRIENDS • Free voice personal ads
p 50

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GUEST COMMENTARY

BY KRISTAN ASPEN

A call to action

Now is the time to build community and organize for justice

Let's face it. A lot of us are angry. The election didn't go as we would have liked, and it is now clear the tides have turned in Washington, D.C. We are going to have trouble standing our ground, let alone making any headway toward LGBT civil rights, preserving women's rights or protecting the earth, our children, poor people, those without health care, the hungry, the elderly and the destitute. The list of those falling through the safety net is growing daily.

This new millennium is not beginning auspiciously. Even if Dubya only lasts four years, the effects of his administration likely will be with us well beyond the next decade. So, what are we doing about it?

I'll tell you what I'm doing. I am throwing my lot in with lesbians. I am investing in our community through the Lesbian Community Project. I know that together we can dream up creative, supportive, useful, fun and effective ways to take a stand, use our clout and forge collaborations to resist and hopefully turn back the fundamentalist, conservative, reactionary right wing before we all forget what a democratic society looked like.

Do you think I'm overreacting? Do you think it's not really *that bad*? I would like to suggest this is exactly what King George wants us to think.

He and his team of media spin wizards are pumping out the propaganda as fast as they can to distract us from the fact that our president is thumbing his nose at the democratic system. And we the people, we the LGBT people, we the women, we the people of color, we the young people, we the elderly, we the poor and powerless, have to see his blatant disregard for us as a call to action.

Now is the time to dedicate ourselves 100 percent to "building community and organizing for justice." This is the work of the Lesbian Community Project, an organization already known regionally and nationally for its innovative leadership in supporting the health and well-being of lesbians.

I invite you to join us. We offer a sliding fee scale for membership, so I can think of no reason why every lesbian and lesbian ally in the state is not an LCP member. Yes, LCP is a women's organization, but we welcome everyone who supports lesbian leadership and our mission (which should be just about everyone reading this paper) to be a contributor.

I calculate at least 50,000 lesbians live in Oregon. That's 5 percent of 1 million, so probably it's a low estimate. If 10 percent of all lesbians in the state joined LCP, we would be 5,000 strong. That's a formidable membership!

Add in all our friends and allies, and imagine what we could do!

Imagine the myriad projects we could take on! Think of the difference we could make in so many situations by motivating our members to speak out, take action, show up and otherwise pressure the system toward inclusiveness, fairness and other democratic principles.

LCP does not have 5,000 members. No organization in our community does. But we have the potential to grow and develop a powerful lesbian voice. All it will take is you making the commitment, joining with your lesbian sisters, to nurture a community that respects and understands our differences as it focuses on what we have in common and how our struggles intersect with those of our trans, bi and gay brothers and sisters.

The LGBT community needs LCP and other established queer organizations to provide the foundation for a collaborative activist network that will allow us to learn from each other as we work cooperatively together. The most effective action I can take against reactionary forces is to participate in my own community, to practice collaboration by supporting our allies and to show up and speak out on behalf of lesbians whenever possible.

It's what I can do. It's what I want to do. It's the best way I know to preserve my sanity at a very challenging time in history.

I have lived in Portland for 30 years as a lesbian and a community organizer. I know what it takes to start new organizations. I know what it will take to keep LCP alive. It will take time and money, which means volunteers and members.

I invite you to join me and 200 others who already have made the commitment. If

you've got a better idea, I'd like to hear it, but I don't want any excuses for not participating. It's 2001, and a vibrant, active Lesbian Community Project is critical to the health and well-being of our whole community.

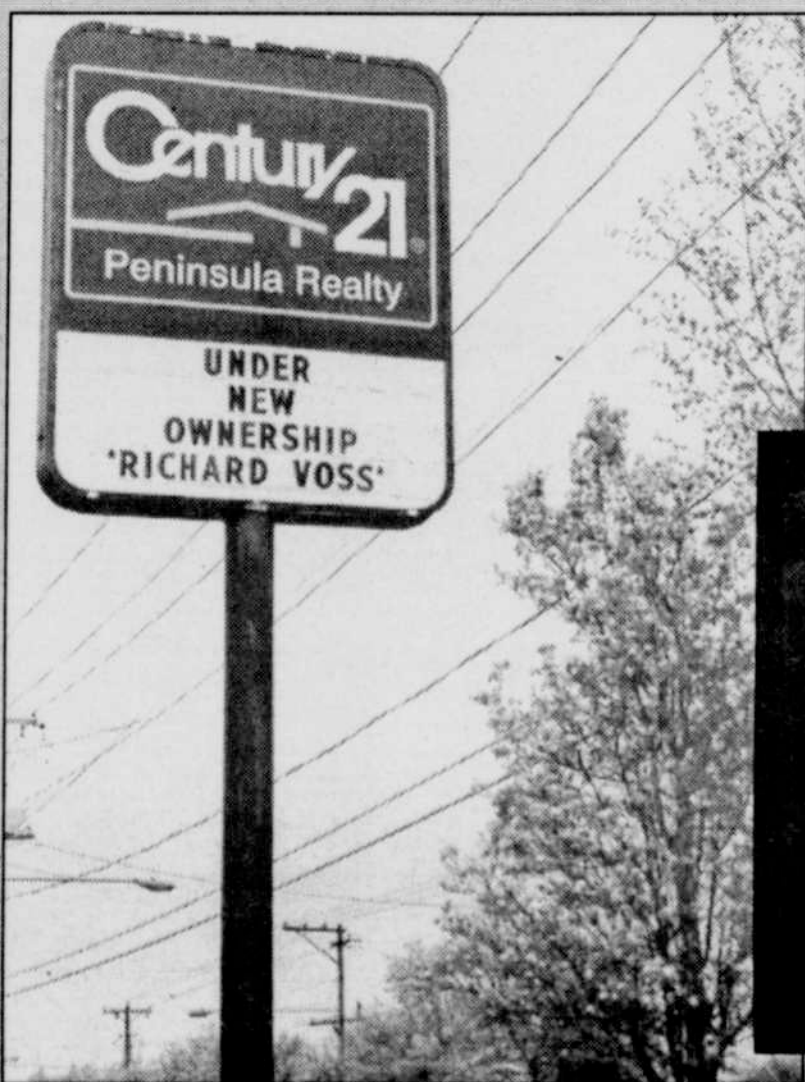
So, give LCP a call. And watch the *Just Out* calendar for special April events open to everyone, including a women's music history slide show, a gender-bender all-ages SQUEER Dance and Deaf Culture Night.

Members are invited to help shape the future of LCP at the annual membership meeting May 6. I expect the room to be packed with lesbians ready to "build community and organize for justice." Can we count on your support?

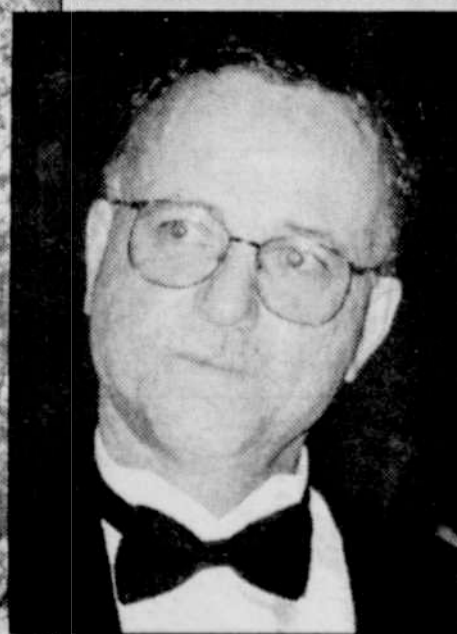
KRISTAN ASPEN is executive director of the Lesbian Community Project. For more information call 503-233-3913.

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Way to go, Richard!



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