

Continued from Page 7

was planned to celebrate SMYRC's new facility and to ask the community for its financial support.

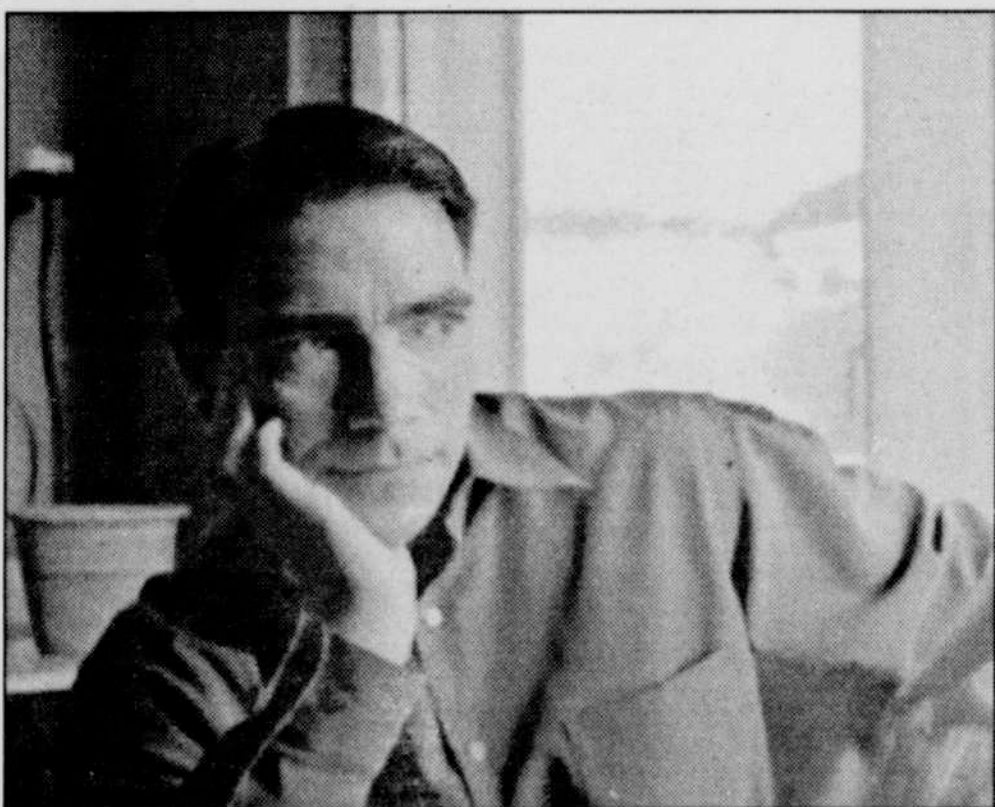
"I want to thank you all for coming today to see our fabulous new space," said Kathy Belge, the program's manager. The event included youth-guided tours, food and beverages, a carnival with games of chance and skill, a Dunk the Drag Queen attraction and an evening drag show.

The new facility at 2100 S.E. Belmont St. houses SMYRC and Vanguard Youth Services (formerly Phoenix Rising), a program of Network Behavioral HealthCare. Other programs include Roots and Branches, Bridge 13, HIV Prevention, Clackamas County Sexual Minority Youth Coalition and Washington County Pride Project.

SMYRC is a drop-in recreation center for sexual minority and questioning kids 23 and younger. Youth play pool, use computers, access resources, meet people, make art and have fun in the facility, organizers say.

An \$80,000 grant from the Commission on Children, Families and Community of Multnomah County helped SMYRC move from its old location on East Burnside Street. The United Way, Portland Parks and Recreation, Washington, Clackamas and Multnomah counties; and individual donors provided financial support.

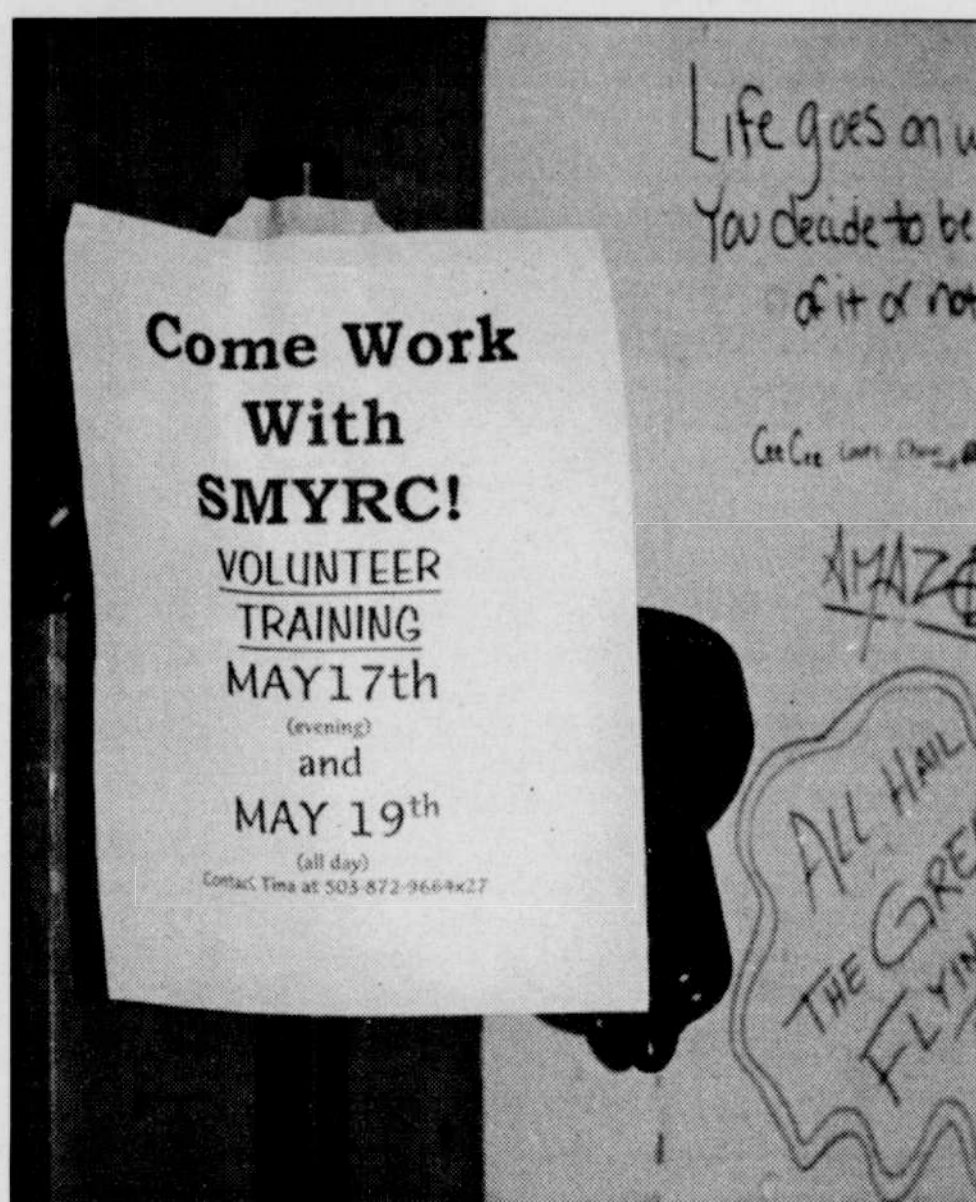
Joey, a youth who has attended the center since it opened five years ago, told the crowd: "SMYRC is like a second home to me. We're about youth having fun in a safe place for them."



Former Lake Oswego resident John Hensala is putting "don't ask, don't tell" to the test

Abbey, Rosebud 24, said that sexual minority youth don't really have a voice but that SMYRC helps give them one. "Thank you from the bottom of my heart," she told the supporters.

Matthew Nelson, Equity Foundation executive director, acknowledged the importance of SMYRC for young people. His organization has donated almost \$50,000 to the center through the years.



The Sexual Minority Youth Recreation Center needs volunteers and financial support

SMYRC helps youth accept who they are earlier in their lives, which deserves support, Nelson said. "Youth are coming out at an age that we would have never dreamed of. We were too afraid."

For more information on volunteering or to make a contribution call 503-872-9664 or visit the Internet site www.smyrc.org.

OREGON NATIVE MAKES HEADLINES

A former Lake Oswego resident was the subject of a March 13 article in *The Advocate*.

San Francisco psychiatrist John Hensala, honorably discharged in 1997 after coming out of the closet, now is locked in a court battle with the military because of his revelation. Although Air Force officials will not comment on the record, they allege that he timed his disclosure to get out of service, and they want him to pay back more than \$70,000 for medical training.

When Hensala was notified of his impending duty in 1994, the Pentagon just had adopted a new policy on gays and lesbians in the military. Under "don't ask, don't tell,"

sexual minorities could serve if they kept their private lives to themselves.

Hensala said he didn't realize he was gay until he already was in medical school. He was planning to serve as a closeted man, but as the date for active duty approached, he said he realized he couldn't effectively perform his duties as a psychiatrist while being untruthful about himself.

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