

# FAMILY PRIDE 2001

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than the general population. "Deaths from preventable diseases are higher for African American men than any other group in the nation," he says.

Herrera knew when he moved to Portland from Houston four years ago that he wanted to be involved in the African American gay community. He works both on the front lines and behind the scenes doing not only the face-to-face work but also sitting on various committees for both the county and the state.

Herrera appears genuinely encouraged by the progress and participation he observes in these various organizations. "One thing I like about being active in these boards and committees is it's really encouraging seeing all these people coming around the table participating in collective sharing, all for the same cause, and it's often on a volunteer basis. That way, I can see the commitment of other people, and they can see mine as well."

As if he wasn't busy enough, Herrera is also a full-time student at Portland Community College's Cascade Campus, where he is majoring in multicultural anthropology.

He lives with his partner, David Scott, who owns Tonic Salon. He seems like he's on a roll, calling their time together "the best two years of

my life." Their relationship also allows him to bring some of his own personal experience to another issue Brother to Brother discusses: interracial dating.

Herrera is coordinating the organization's involvement in this year's Gay Pride parade. Typical of his attitude, he's quick to point out that they're looking for more people to march and welcome absolutely anyone.

—RB

## REGINA MOONEY

College professors sometimes seem inhuman. Do they *really* go to the bathroom? What do they do hibernating behind those office doors all day? As a timid freshman at Reed College, I was not about to find out.

Then I got an invitation. As a member of the student-run Queer Alliance, I was invited to a party held by Regina Mooney, the college vice president and the dean of student services.

What was she doing inviting me to a party? She's the one who hands out punishments. She probably has a forked tongue and prefers to eat her students deep-fried with a dab of ketchup.

But college cafeteria fare had turned me into a toothpick, and the party's promise of tasty appetizers made me hungry. I came up with a plan: Grab some grub and sneak out of there.

I got to her house guarded by a phalanx of other flaming and dyke students who already knew Mooney. I tried to hide behind the delicious plate of lox I was devouring, but she found me.

When she smiled, she didn't have any fangs. We even began to talk. I learned that she's a lesbian and that she wanted to meet new students



PHOTO BY PETER ZUCKERMAN

and introduce them to other queer students as well as queer staff and faculty members.

After the party, I felt like a member of this secret club. Now I say hello to those I met at the party. We all look out for each other.

Mooney does more than run the school and make herself an approachable, friendly resource for students. She also has helped them come out of the closet and helped their parents come to terms with this.

"Sometimes parents think their gay kid can never be normal," Mooney told me. "They think their daughters have to wear flannel shirts and drink lots of beer. I try to show them that a

gay person not only can lead a happy and 'normal' lifestyle but also can have a family and professional job."

Mooney also makes herself available to students—queer or straight—who just want to drop in or seek advice. Her office door is almost always propped open.

Mooney is the only woman and only homosexual ever to hold her position at Reed. She makes sure diversity issues are kept in the forefront and serves as a role model for the student body.

"Educational institutions are traditionally very conservative," Mooney explains. "When I started interviewing for positions, I made it clear that they would have to accept that I'm gay or I didn't want their job."

At Reed, Mooney's sexuality has been welcomed and affirmed. "You realize how far it's come when it's this normalized," she says. "I can even make inside gay jokes around my co-workers."

I ask Mooney why she does all this for the students. "I want students to actualize their own authenticity," she explained. "I want them to be their own particular self." Then, after a pause, Mooney adds, "And I haven't met a particularity that scared me yet."

—PZ

## KIMBER NELSON

When Kimber Nelson was born, the doctors made a horrific mistake would not be discovered for 20 years: The doctors assigned him as female.

"At first, I was attracted to women and thought I was just gay," he says. "Then I started

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