

SO FAR, SO GOOD

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ROP staff and board members have put together a five-year plan to help everyone stay focused. The broad-based goals include:

- Build statewide power for democracy.
- Build local group capacity.
- Improve statewide database of activists and supporters.
- Educate members about links among oppressions, organizing and power.
- Clarify the membership structure and roles.
- Break isolation through communication.

In addition, ROP lists 14 different objectives that have grown from the group's mission and that support its goals.

One of the key facets of the organization's work is the communication process. It isn't easy keeping people in one rural area in contact with others across the state.

The group already has a newsletter, *The ROP Report*; a unique e-mail communication network, ROPNET; a monthly project of short actions, Kitchen Table

Activism; and an annual conference, the Rural Caucus and Strategy Session. Among the objectives is to build on those communication systems already in place and make them better.

Another key objective for the group is finding a way to improve Oregon's infrastructure for addressing and preventing hate crimes.

One of the key upcoming projects of ROP affecting the gay and lesbian community is "Decline to Sign," which counters the OCA's attempts to gather enough signatures for yet another anti-gay ballot initiative. A similar campaign waged several years ago was successful, and supporters hope to prevent yet another divisive fight in 2002.

Other upcoming efforts include "Project Fishbowl," in which ROP will coordinate local actions to expose politicians' stands on issues. In addition, the group hopes to establish Anti-Bias Task Forces in all Oregon counties.

Westerling says activists from throughout the state will gather together for a strategy session July 10 to discuss exactly what they don't want see on the 2002 ballot. "And if they don't want to see it," she notes, "what are they willing to do to make sure they don't have to?"



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS



None of that work ever would get done without the support of those who believe in ROP's efforts. And like all nonprofit organizations, there is always a need for additional assistance.

Westerling says ROP is seeking people who are willing to say, "I support this, and I am willing to do this and this to make it happen." Maybe that means something as simple as stopping by the Scappoose office to mow the lawn or work in the yard. (All of the plants, flowers and mulch have been donated.)

"Maybe that's saying, 'I have an hour a month, and I will give it,'" Westerling says.

There is always a need for addition funds.

ROP receives money from a number of different sources, including state and national foundations, groups around the state and tax-deductible donations from individuals who believe in the work that is being done. The Denver-based Gill Foundation just awarded \$15,000 for general operating support during its latest grant cycle in May.

Other suggestions Westerling has for those who might wish to lend a hand include going door to door and signing up 10 people to vote or simply "being a responsible voter."

When asked whether she ever could have imagined how much ROP would accomplish when she got that first check 10 years ago from

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