

NORTHWEST news

Clark County and Longview.

"It means that for the first time ever, people are going to realize that we are indeed everywhere, not just in large cities but in suburbs, small towns and rural areas," said David Elliot, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force communications director. "We are now part of the American landscape."

Not surprisingly, the Hawthorne district reported a large concentration of same-sex partners. About one in 20 of the area's married or cohabitating couples is lesbian; one in 50 is gay.

HIP CHICKS WINERY FINALLY OPENS

Portland's newest urban winery, Hip Chicks Do Wine, finally is having its grand opening. It will open its doors to the masses from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Aug. 11 and 12 at 4510 S.E. 23rd Ave. just south of Holgate Boulevard.

For \$5, Hip Chicks promise visitors will walk away with a first-edition logo glass, wine tastings, munchies and a good time. On the wine list are the new releases of Vin Nombriil, a semisweet white table wine, and Shardoneaux, a dry white wine. Hip Chicks also will be barrel tasting their 1999 Columbia Valley Merlot and 1999 Willamette Valley Pinot Noir.

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE PASSES SMITH HATE CRIMES BILL

The Senate Judiciary Committee passed U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith's legislation to extend existing federal hate crimes laws to include gender, disability and sexual orientation July 26.

The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2001 is a bipartisan bill with 51 cosponsors. Upon its passage, Smith sent a letter to Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., urging him to schedule a vote before the August recess.

"A government's first duty is to protect and defend its citizens," the Oregon Republican said. "Our laws should do that by reflecting our highest values, not by sheltering our lowest fears. We must not let another week pass without expanding hate crimes to include gender, disability and sexual orientation. The Senate leadership should take action immediately to make this bill a reality."

The Senate—including 13 Republicans—voted 57-42 last June to pass the language of the act. The House—including 41 Republicans—voted 232-192 on Sept. 13 to pass a motion to instruct conferees to keep the hate crimes measure in the Defense Department bill. Despite bipartisan passage in the House and Senate, opponents stripped out hate crimes legislation while the bill was in conference.

Currently, federal law only permits prosecution of a hate crime if it prevents the victim from exercising a federally protected right, such as voting. In addition to the new categories, the act will broaden federal jurisdiction to include hate crimes that cause death or bodily injury.

Hate crimes based on sexual orientation are at an all-time high. 1999—the latest year for which statistics are available—saw a 4.5 percent increase, according to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, making them the third-highest category listed.

These numbers are particularly disturbing

because, overall, serious crime continues to decrease nationally. Since the FBI began collecting statistics in 1991, hate crimes against gay men and lesbians have more than tripled.

"This is a popular measure that has the votes



Laurie Lewis (left) and Renee Neely finally will uncork their red wine after enduring months of red tape

in both houses to pass," said Ralph G. Neas, People for the American Way president. "Let's hope that this year the House leadership will let it come to a floor vote."

TASK FORCE ISSUES WARNING

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force already is training for the next fight against Lon Mabon. It issued a press release July 25 listing Oregon among the 12 cities, counties and states that are expected to face anti-gay ballot campaigns during the next 16 months.

Assuming the Student Protection Act II—a watered-down version of last year's narrowly defeated Measure 9—qualifies for the ballot, we will join Maryland, Maine and Nevada in voting on anti-gay ballot measures in November 2002. The Oregon Citizens Alliance is behind the effort to prevent the positive or neutral mention of homosexuality in public schools.

Between November 2001 and November 2002, similar referendums are anticipated in Broward County and Dade County, Fla.; Houston; and possibly Ypsilanti and Grand Haven, Mich. Three Michigan cities—Kalamazoo, Traverse City and Huntington Woods—face anti-gay votes to overturn existing civil rights laws Nov. 6.

In addition, a group of right-wing activists announced last month it would seek to place an anti-same-sex marriage initiative on the 2004 statewide ballot in Massachusetts. That measure also could ban state recognition of domestic partner benefits and threaten other rights such as inheritance, the ability to make emergency medical decisions for one's partner and adoption.

HOW DO YOU SPELL TAX RELIEF? B-R-O!

Basic Rights Oregon has devised a clever idea to raise money: It is asking supporters to donate all or part of their tax relief to the fight against discrimination.

In exchange, the nonprofit organization will dispatch a letter directly to President Bush indicat-

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