

COMMUNITY CATALYST

Vancouver roundtable endeavors to connect southwest Washington's sexual minorities by Timothy Krause

You can't build a community without people knowing who's in the community," says John Furze, a member of the Vancouver-based Sexual Minority Leadership Roundtable. So, after nearly a year of identifying southwest Washington resources for sexual minorities, this informal group of community leaders has launched Rainbow Links, a new telephone hot line to parallel a revamped Web site.

Funded by contributions, the hot line offers an automated menu system featuring listings in seven categories. Among the topics are religious and spiritual resources; social and support groups; health and HIV services; and family and youth information. This directory identifies agencies, organizations and businesses not only in Vancouver but also as far away as Cowlitz, Lewis, Pacific and Klickitat counties. And the roundtable plans to facilitate long-distance access by adding a toll-free number soon.

Concurrently, the Web site is being updated to include all of the same information. In addition,

Whatever shape the network takes, Furze says the goal will be expediency. "It's about how to not wait two or three months to find out about something," he explains. "Sometimes by the time you read about it, it's over. So this is basically about how to get important information out fast."

Once the communication infrastructure is in place, the roundtable will begin a dialogue with the community to assess other needs. Seniors and trans people are two of the underserved populations whose concerns might be addressed.

"Where we go from here is going to continue to be influenced by what we hear from the community and the interest and expertise of the people who volunteer to be on the roundtable," says Kip Beardsley, gay health promoter at the Southwest Washington Health District in Vancouver and one of the roundtable's founding members.

In the meantime, what's good for the community at large has been good for individual members of the roundtable, too. For example,



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

Members of the Sexual Minority Leadership Roundtable meet Sept. 13 to brainstorm ideas to build a stronger, more connected community

tion, the online service provides an events calendar and interactive message board.

"There's been a lack of understanding of what is here," notes Furze, a counselor at the Children's Home Society of Washington. "A lot of people tend to go to Portland for what should be a Vancouver community. But we want them to be accessing services here and seeing here as home."

Another member of the roundtable is Llyn Zephyr, coordinator of Vancouver's Sexual Minority Services Project. When distributing information at events, she has found many are surprised to learn what is available north of the Columbia River.

At a booth during Portland's Gay Pride, for example, she says, "People from Vancouver visited us and said: 'We didn't know there was a celebration. We didn't know there were services.'"

Roundtable members began meeting last autumn after a handful of providers sought to pool individual resources. Their original goal was to provide comprehensive services without duplication, but they soon saw the resulting directory as a valuable way of communicating to the public what local resources were available.

The roundtable now hopes to build on this foundation by developing a way for members of the southwest Washington sexual minorities community to communicate with each other quickly and easily. One method might be an e-mail list, but Zephyr notes that because many people are not connected to the Internet yet, other more traditional avenues will be explored as well.

Zephyr has been able to identify where gaps exist in services for the sexual minorities community and has brainstormed ways to meet these needs through the cooperation and collaboration of the roundtable's diverse participants.

Among the wide representation of stakeholders is the city of Vancouver. Openly gay City Councilor Jim Moeller has attended meetings of the roundtable, and Zephyr says his participation has helped focus a lot of the ideas.

"I am very excited about the existence of the new roundtable and its potential for future impact on our community in total," he says. "I think it's going to be important for any kind of community in the future that these kinds of roundtables and communication continue and be developed as much as possible."

Other organizations active on the roundtable include Columbia River Mental Health; Cowlitz County Health District HIV Support Group; First Congregational Church of Christ; Imperial Sovereign Court of the Raintree Empire; Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays; Peace Health Behavior Health/Choices; Soulforce; United Church of Christ; and YWCA Safechoice Domestic Violence Program. **J**

The SEXUAL MINORITY LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE welcomes others to participate, especially gay business owners from outlying areas of southwest Washington. For details call Llyn Zephyr at 360-695-1325, ext. 332, or visit the Internet site gayvancouverwa.org. The hot line, 360-816-6877, is up and running.

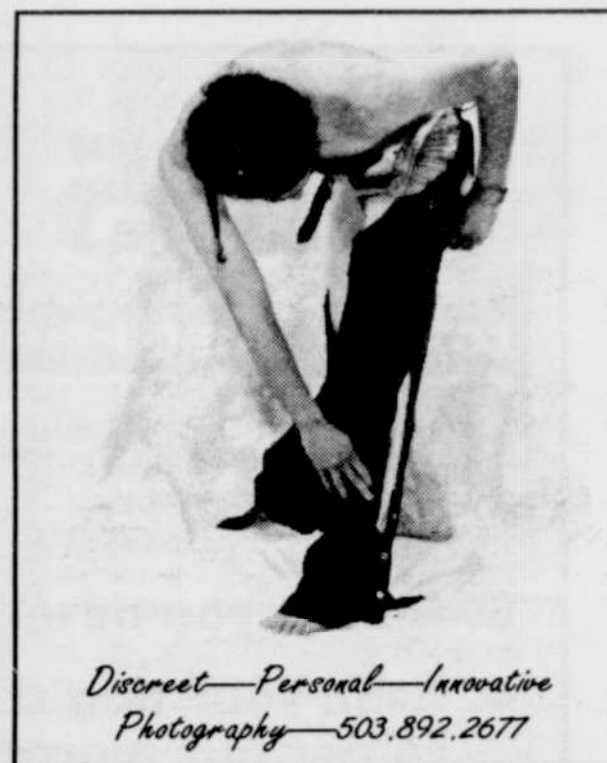
Cancun, Mexico

- Exclusive RSVP Week -
Club Med Village
Nov. 3-10
from **\$899** ppdo
(land only)

Includes accommodations, 3 meals daily, wine & beer with lunch/dinner, gratuities, most sports, theme parties. Subject to availability.

LLOYD TRAVEL

1026 NE Multnomah
503-288-5145
Mon. - Fri. 8:30 am - 5:30 pm
Sat. 10 am - 3 pm



Discreet—Personal—Innovative
Photography—503.892.2677



When an ordinary Realtor simply won't do...



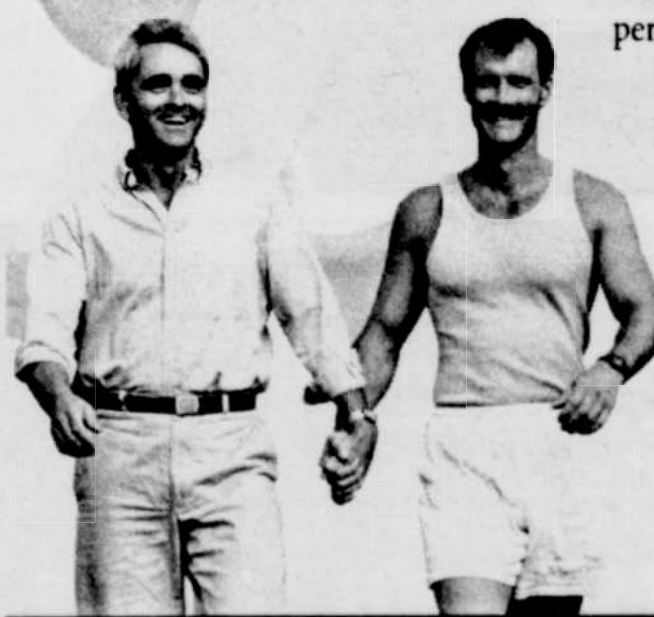
3144 SE Belmont
Portland, OR 97214
office: 503-238-7617



Free Seminar for the GLBT Community "The 2001 Tax Law: a Personal, Business and Estate Planning Preview of the Benefits"

Here's What You'll Find Out:

- An overview of the 2001 Tax Law—with emphasis on the unique benefits and challenges facing the GLBT Community
- How to avoid the legal prejudices many individuals in the GLBT community face
- How to protect your partner's right to visit you in the hospital and ensure that family members permit visitation
- How to ensure your estate records will remain private and confidential, protecting both you and your partner



KENNEDY SCHOOL	GREENWOOD INN
Tuesday October 16 th 6:30-8:30 p.m. 5736 NE 33 rd Portland	Thursday, October 18 th 6:30-8:30 p.m. 10700 SW Allen Blvd. Beaverton

Dinner will be served
and there's plenty of free parking
♦ Reservations are required ♦

**Seating Is Limited. Call 503-241-1215
Or Register Online At www.rbsllc.com**

Floreid Walker, Senior Financial Advisor
Waddell & Reed
500 NE Multnomah #278
Portland, Oregon 97232
503.238.6036

Co-Sponsored By: Richard B. Schneider, Attorney At Law
Law Offices Of Richard B. Schneider, LLC
2455 NW Marshall St., Suite 11
Portland, Oregon 97210
503.241.1215