

just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

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COMMENTARY

How do you spell relief?

Tough economic times require smart spending decisions

The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks have affected all of us in different ways. For me, the uncontrollable urge of needing-to-know has altered my morning ritual. Now, upon awakening, the first thing I do is fumble for the remote, usually warm and toasty under the dog, and click on the television. If I see a commercial or Katie Couric, then I know the world didn't end overnight. If I awake to Tom Brokaw, it's likely to be a bad day.

One recent morning I woke to the blurry image of a gaunt, starving Afghani woman. But then as my eyes focused and my hearing kicked in, I realized it was actually Maria Shriver reporting live from the NBC studios. I truly don't mean to be harsh, but Mrs. Conan manages to make the refugees look hale and hearty. Shouldn't someone arrange for the government to drop a couple of extra relief food packages on the Kennedy compound? In times of crisis, charity begins at home. Americans obviously are starving in Hyannis Port, Mass.

My take on the country's current mental state is that we rapidly are moving out of the warm-and-fuzzy "one nation united" stage and into the freaking-out "oh my God, it's anthrax" phase. It's clear to me that these new behaviors are dangerous and unnecessary and that as a nation we now are playing right into scripted roles. These fears and alarms are potentially far more dangerous than the actual disease. Looking back at earlier troubling times in our history, let's not ignore the leader who noted, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

While the world works to regain solid footing and moves further into military attack mode, gay men and lesbians must stay diligent and aware of front-line attacks within our nation from the ever-present anti-gay extremists. Nov. 6 is Election Day in many states, and voters will find at least four pivotal initiatives placed before them.

With the absurd yet heinous words of Jerry Falwell and his ilk lingering in the back of people's minds, now unfortunately is an opportune time for our own American Taliban to make advances because of distracted or simply absent voters. While we individually can't vote in Michigan or Texas, we must stay alert to what's going on here at home and not allow sneak attacks while politicians struggle with budgets, bailouts, shortfalls, unemployment and myriad concerns resulting from terrorism.

On a more personal note, we've also got to take care of ourselves—and each other. We need to come together as a community—a community held together by economic goals, cultural sameness as well as cultural diversity and that ephemeral, elusive "tie that binds."

Oregon officially has been declared to be in a recession. With an unemployment rate at 6 percent and rising, the effect of a slow economy is or soon will start to be felt by all of us.

Just because you're not a laid-off Freightliner worker doesn't mean you're not going to be affected. People who lose jobs don't go out to dinner, don't buy big-ticket items and don't waste money on non-essentials. Their spending comes to a halt.

The next person laid off will be a waiter or a retail clerk who will join the former Freightliner worker in the unemployment line. The next business that shuts down will belong to a struggling entrepreneur, and again more jobs will be lost.

When neighborhood businesses close down and retail areas become devalued, residential real estate properties soon follow. By investing in your local merchants you not only are helping save jobs, you also are keeping communities vital and preserving their integrity.

Is saving a few dollars by shopping at giant warehouse stores really that important? Will you be able to garner long-term value from those dollars or cents saved, or will they come back to bite you in the butt?

To bring a stop to this cycle we've got to provide economic support for each other.

Those who have money must make wise choices about where to spend it.

The impact of your dollars is far greater than you might think. It is imperative that we support gay- and lesbian-owned business and other independents who've been supportive of our community and our struggles.

A recession, terrorism and the start of the dreary gray rainy season is bound to get everyone down at some point or another. When this happens to you please get out, join your friends and community and have some good old fun.

Social events for and by gay men and lesbians abound in our area. Take advantage of the positive energy that is being put out by the likes of the Rosetown Ramblers with their dances and roller-skating events. Listen to music at Touchstone; hang out at 3 Friends or Crush.

Go bowling, play volleyball, and, oh yeah, come to the Just Out Singles Halloween Party. We are going to have a great time, and we'd like you to join us. ☐

The JUST OUT SINGLES HALLOWEEN PARTY will feature a costume contest, prizes galore and free sushi from 6:30 to 9 p.m. Oct. 31 at Dragonfish, 909 S.W. Park Ave.

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