



Badge of courage

Lesbian police officer fights for fairness

BY JIM RADOSTA

As far as Katie Potter is concerned, it all boils down to fairness and equality.

The Portland Police Bureau cop has taken on a leadership role in changing Chapter 5 of the city's charter to make domestic partners of officers and firefighters eligible for death, retirement and other benefits. The current language only refers to spouses and dependent minor children.



Katie Potter

Potter—whose father, Tom, was Portland's police chief during the early 1990s—noticed the matter after she took a job in the bureau's benefits and disabilities office. She strongly feels all people should be treated equally.

"It just kind of slapped me in the face that my family, which is so important to me, has no support financially should something happen," she says. "My family is as important as anybody else's family."

Several months ago Potter approached Sam Adams, Mayor Vera Katz's openly gay chief of staff, to address the problem. "I just took the information over and said that I would like them to review the obvious inequities in the city charter and do some research on what it would take to change that," she says.

Katz then spoke with the city attorney as well as the legal adviser for the Portland Fire and Police Disability and Retirement Fund. Under the current charter, they concluded, extending benefits would be impossible.

Potter says she is certain the language will be revised. But how this will come about is an unknown entity at this point.

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