

BADGE OF COURAGE

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One option is to let Portland voters decide. Another is to have it mandated by law in Salem, but Potter doubts this will happen.

"To get any sort of legislation like this through the state Legislature, at least according to folks down there, would be next to impossible," she says. "They're not always quick to extend rights to us."

Potter says a court challenge might be necessary. However, she wants to avoid this if at all possible.

"I don't know how it's all going to come out in the wash," she says. "Ideally, I would like to not have to go through that sort of battle."

Potter says Katz, the Portland City Council and most members of the fund's trustees board already support the cause. Now, she admits she just needs to be patient as the long process gets under way.

"It's just a matter of changing the actual law that guides us, and that can be kind of a difficult thing," she says. "I certainly don't want to put a fire under people who are already fired up about it."

Potter points to Katz's strong track record with the sexual minorities community as evidence indicating city support. Besides, she would rather do anything to avoid entering into an antagonistic role with her employer.

"As long as people are forward-thinking and



Katie Potter says Sept. 11 highlighted the need for equality

making some sort of progress on this issue, then I'm happy with that," she says. "If it appears that no further progress can be made, then I'll have to look at an alternative manner of trying to get this done."

But that only would be a worst-case scenario, Potter emphasizes. The last thing she wants is to spend less time with her family.

She and her partner of 11 years, fellow cop Pam Moen, have a 2 1/2-year-old daughter, McKenzie. Because Potter is not working full time, she relies on Moen's insurance.

"If something happened to me...we'd be absolutely devastated," she says. "I'd be devastated if something happened to my partner—emotionally and financially."

People already are taking notice of Potter's advocacy: She has been named Grand Marshal for the Pride 2002 parade June 16. She modestly feels conflicted about the recognition.

"I definitely passionately believe in justice and equality, but I don't spend every minute of my life fighting for it," she says. "I think that there are a lot more people who probably have done a lot more for

our community than I have."

Regardless, Potter says she feels truly honored to have been chosen. "I just can't even believe it, really. Wow!"

She thinks Sept. 11 might have had something to do with the decision. "Maybe they wanted to...highlight somebody in emergency services," she speculates.

Although Potter says equality always has been an urgent matter, the terrorist

attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., make it more important than ever. Activists have been struggling for months to ensure benefits will be extended to the survivors of gay men and lesbians killed in the World Trade Center.

"Sept. 11 is really giving people the opportunity to see that all people contribute," Potter says. "All of us—and not just police and firefighters, but that certainly has been a highlighted profession because they're the ones running to the building as opposed to away from the building when that happened—we're doing the same thing."

"We have families, too. We would like the same benefits extended to us. Not just straight families are devastated by what happened, all families are devastated by what happened. Should we change their whole lives and not support them financially through their loss just because they love someone of the same sex? That's crazy." □



Just Out profiled Katie Potter and her father, Tom, in May 1991

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