

## NORTHWEST news

tal illness and chemical dependency.

The new corporation, Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare, will have more than 1,000 staff members serving almost 9,000 residents of Columbia, Marion, Multnomah and Washington counties. Network merged Jan. 2 with Mount Hood Community Mental Health of Gresham; managers are planning to absorb Unity Inc. of Portland in April.

According to Cascadia representatives, the merger will enable the nonprofit organization to provide more flexible services for a wider range of clientele over a larger geographical area. They say the consolidation will standardize quality of treatment services, eliminate redundancies and provide immediate cost savings.

For more information contact Jason Renaud at 503-552-8889 or [jason@cascadiabhc.org](mailto:jason@cascadiabhc.org).

### SMITH URGES VOTE ON HATE CRIMES BILL

U.S. Sens. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., and Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., joined a bipartisan group of colleagues Jan. 24 in sending a letter to Majority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., urging him to bring hate crimes legislation to the floor for a vote as soon as possible.

"Hate crimes are still increasing across our country," they wrote. "The FBI's hate crimes statistics report last November showed that while overall serious crime remained almost unchanged nationally from 1999 to 2000—with the crime index at its lowest level since 1978—reported hate crimes continued to rise 3.5 percent during that time. This continued increase, along with the hundreds of hate crimes committed since Sept. 11, have strengthened our resolve that the federal government has an essential role to play."

Since 1969, federal statutes have permitted prosecution of hate crimes motivated by race, religion, national origin or color if the victim was engaging in one of six "federally protected" activities. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act would remove this requirement and add sexual orientation, gender and disability to the covered categories.

"It is long past time to give stronger tools to law enforcement officials dealing with hate crimes and to bring the federal hate crimes statute up to date," Smith and Kennedy wrote. "Knowing of your strong support for this legislation and the principles behind it, we look forward to working with you for a Senate vote as soon as possible."

The Democratic National Committee approved a resolution last month calling for immediate action on the act. Hate crimes legislation has strong bipartisan support and has passed the Senate twice in the past three years.

### PROJECT CLOSED, SEEKS CO-DIRECTOR

The Sexual Minority Services Project in Vancouver, Wash., will remain closed through February because of the executive director's continued ill health.

Llyn Zephyr announced Jan. 30 she is seeking a co-director who shares her commitment to the organization's vision. She says the doors might close permanently if she is unable to fill the slot.

The project is a safe place for sexual minorities to gather for socialization, providing an extensive resource directory as well as a small but growing library and board games for amusement. It also offers peer support and domestic violence advocacy.

Last month the project was set to launch support groups for trans individuals and their families, couples and people who want to quit unhealthy behaviors. Although the volunteers are in place, they have been unable to meet because of the closure.

In the development stages are programs for youth domestic violence advocacy, mentoring, seniors and women's health. Other co-director duties include holding a volunteer drive, writing grant applications and planning for expansion of services.

For more information call 360-695-1325, ext. 332.

### GENDER ALLIANCE HONORS KATZ

The Northwest Gender Alliance honored Portland Mayor Vera Katz with the Ellen Summers Lifetime Achievement Award on Jan. 26.

Because of a bad cold and inclement weather, the mayor was unable to attend the dinner. The award was named in honor of an alliance founder and a driving force in the national organization of the International Foundation for Gender Education. NWGA members hope to be able to present Katz with the award at a later date. **J**

Compiled by JIM RADOSTA, MARTY DAVIS, HEATHER HYBARGER and PATRICIA L. MACAODHA



Portland Mayor Vera Katz (right) was recognized by the Northwest Gender Alliance for her support of sexual minority issues, such as Multnomah County's domestic partner registry

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