

Katherine Tennyson says she never has had a negative professional experience related to her sexual orientation



PHOTOS BY MARY DAVIS

and neglected children, and she received more and more cases. "One of the things they say when you start your own firm is you become an expert in an area where you have more than two cases," she says with a smile.

Multnomah County is progressive to have the Family Law Panel with its "one judge, one family" integrated model. A family often has more than one issue: Divorce, child custody, juvenile delinquency and substance abuse issues all might be going on at once. Rather than have a different judge or hearing for every separate issue, the panel assigns one judge who sees and hears the family through the entire process of resolution.

"I think a judge sits in a unique position to hopefully see the global problem and try to come up with the most common-sense legal solution...especially in a family law case," Tennyson says. "A judge is really going to be the most dispassionate person in the room.

As a lawyer, as an advocate, you can get caught up in

your client's own story, and the next thing you know, you have lost perspective. The job of the judge is to figure out what everybody's side is, understand what the law is and then make it work."

And Tennyson knows how to make it work: Get everyone to come together. She has been practicing how to do that since the second grade, when she joined the Girl Scouts.

"I am a lifetime, card-carrying member," she says. "I don't think there is anything about me that I can't point to my experience of being a Girl Scout and say, 'That was incredibly instrumental.' I always think, 'OK, how can I get everybody to work together?' It gets ingrained in you—how to approach a problem and how to get everyone on board to solve the problem."

Tennyson's partner of nearly six years is a Portland high school teacher. They like to garden, cook and travel together.

About the time this issue of *Just Out* hits newsstands, Multnomah County residents also will receive a ballot in the mail for the circuit court judicial election.

We have family running for one position—and family is what Katherine Tennyson is all about. Since beginning her own business in 1987 with Kristen Wine-miller, she has devoted her practice to the health and well-being of Oregon families, especially those with troubled youth.

Tennyson, a 1984 graduate of Lewis & Clark College, is running against Al Bannon for Position 1 in District 4. Voters normally do not get a chance to select a judge, and she hopes they will seize the opportunity while they can.

"What is unique right now in this judicial election is that usually there is a list of incumbents and they are running unopposed.

THE FAMILY JUDGE

Lesbian wants to serve on Multnomah County Circuit Court bench

by Kim Stephenson

Voters usually just have one box to check," Tennyson says. "In this election cycle, we have three contested circuit court races. I can't remember a time when there has been three contested seats like this."

The term for a circuit judge is six years. The governor commonly assigns people to the seats because the predecessors often retire before their term is up, and the election cycle is missed.

"It is likely I would be assigned to the Family Law Panel if I was elected because that is my background," Tennyson says. "That runs the gamut of abuse and neglect, child custody, divorce and delinquency and juvenile court-type cases. The Family Law Panel does mental health commitments, probate, second legal parent adoptions, domestic partnership dissolutions—anything that has to do with the family."

When Tennyson launched her practice, she was looking for work anywhere and signed up on the juvenile court-appointed lawyer list. She always had been interested in the field of abused



Tennyson never has hidden her sexual orientation, nor has she boasted it. She always has used the appropriate pronoun and says almost all of her colleagues are aware she is a lesbian. Although she never has had a negative professional experience related to her sexual orientation, fear of some kind of hurtful discrimination played in her mental background.

"I made my world so I wouldn't have to deal with discrimination," she says. "I don't think I realized I really worried about it until the first day of our business, and I thought, 'Hey, I don't have to worry about this anymore.'"

Tennyson says that she has heard prejudiced and derogatory remarks toward sexual minorities come from the mouths of her clients and that she is speaking up more than she used to.

"Ever since I saw Maya Angelou interviewed by Oprah Winfrey, and she said in her house people don't get to say things that are hurtful to other people, I have gotten a lot better at calling people out on things that are hurtful," she says. "When I am a judge, that will certainly be the rule in my courtroom." □

OTHER RACES TO WATCH

Queer voters should keep an eye on several contests this month

by Jim Radosta

A gay man, Karl Rohde (right), is running for state senator of District 19. The Republican has served on the Lake Oswego City Council since 1996 and owns a small business, Precision Events.



According to the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund—a national organization that helps elect openly gay candidates to public office—Rohde has his work cut out for him. His opponents in the three-way primary are former state Reps. Bob Tiernan and Ron Adams.

The Good Government Initiative shifts responsibility of Portland city departments to experienced managers hired by the mayor. Chief petitioner Robert Ball, a gay businessman and reserve police officer, says it will bring diversity to the council because it allows people to run for office by district, making campaigns more affordable.

A City Club of Portland study committee recommended April 26 that its members support Measure 26-30. The group will take a vote during its next meeting May 3.

"A 'yes' vote to change Portland's form of government will remove the structural barriers that increase costs of government and leave citizens disenfranchised," said the executive summary of the report. "If adopted, this measure will unify executive responsibility under the mayor, resulting in better value for our tax dollars, [and] change the role of the council members to full-time legislators, which will improve citizen representation and legislative effectiveness."

Metro Councilor David Bragdon (right) is running for president of the regional government agency. One of his opponents, Kate Schiele, works with Oregonians in Action, a conservative property-rights group.



The other candidate in the race is Rod Monroe, who has told the Oregon Family Council he opposes gay marriage and gay rights legislation. As a state legislator he cast a vote in 1983 to help kill Senate Bill 319, which would have prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation.

David Schuman is running for Oregon Court of Appeals judge Position 1. His opponent, David J. Hunnicutt, serves as corporate counsel for Oregonians in Action.



Marc Abrams (left) is running against Marilyn Litzenberger for Multnomah County Circuit Court judge Position 38 in District 4.

The Portland Public Schools board member was an outspoken advocate for the district's ban on military recruiters because of "don't ask, don't tell." The 7-year-old policy was pulled last month after federal funding was jeopardized by an education bill President Bush signed in January.

Oregon Secretary of State Bill Bradbury—who will challenge incumbent U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., this fall—spoke April 27 at the National Stonewall Democrats convention in Cleveland. The organization, which works to educate the sexual minorities community about political issues of importance, also announced its endorsement of his candidacy.

Bradbury recently got the thumbs-up from Basic Rights Oregon, which normally does not take sides on national races. The Human Rights Campaign has endorsed Smith for his leadership in support of federal hate crimes legislation.

(Although the two groups disagree about who to support, at least they have a common enemy in Lon Mabon: In correspondence dated April 18, HRC sent BRO a check for \$10,000 to fight the Student Protection Act II, which might appear on the fall ballot. It also announced a \$5,000 Equality Fund grant to be used for educational purposes.) □