

from the small eastern Oregon town of Milton-Freewater. Surprisingly enough, his exposure to gay people came early in the form of the community's tolerance and acceptance of four rather openly gay teachers at his high school. At 16 he came out to his mom, who reacted well.

His next step out of the closet came at band camp. (No, it's not a joke.) His openly gay friend was testing out his gaydar after the final concert.

When Sanchez asked how his friend read him, the young man guessed correctly. "The weight of the world was lifted off my shoulders," he says.

Sanchez moved to the Portland area in August to attend Mt. Hood. The first task on his list was finding his classes; the second was finding the Queers and Allies Student Organization. He joined and was thrust into a debate with the Oregon Citizens Alliance, helped coordinate Queer Awareness Week and just was elected vice president.

"We're getting attention and recognition, getting people used to the fact that gay people are around," he says. "We want to share our culture and our rich history."

—ES



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

Dawn Smith

DAWN SMITH

You're a strong, proud, determined lesbian mother of two biracial children who has been living happily in Portland for 18 years.

One day love up and calls and beckons you to follow. Suddenly you find yourself living in a small, conservative Oregon farm town.

What changes does this new life bring to you? Some and none.

Now you find yourself to be a strong, proud, determined lesbian mother of two biracial children who lives in McMinnville, a community noted for traditional "family values" and notably lacking in support and social services for sexual minority youth and adults.

So what do you do? Well, if you're Dawn Smith you dig into your savings account, march

downtown and proudly open up your own beauty shop, the Blue Coyote Rose.

What's in a name, you say? The blue is for Smith's favorite color, coyote represents her Native American side, and rose is the traditional symbol for beauty.

Open for only two months now, the salon is struggling to earn its place in the community. Smith is counting on word of mouth to bring business and friends into her eclectically furnished establishment.

Her goal is to make it a safe place for queers to obtain beauty services and a space to display work created by local artists. Most important of all, it's her dream that the Blue Coyote Rose become a networking center for all sexual minorities living in and around Yamhill County. Smith proudly reports several kids already have found their way to the shop and the comfort and security it provides.

"Because I'm so out and confident of myself and who I am, I find that others gravitate towards me looking for that touch of connection," she says. "I want to be here as a person people can connect with and feel safe with."

For many people in McMinnville, Smith is probably the first gay person they've met. This gives her the opportunity, and challenge, to battle myths and stereotypes while allowing them to respect her for who she is. It's a big job, and Dawn Smith is the right person to take it on.

—Marty Davis

ANITA STACEY

Anita Stacey has an amusing claim to fame: She was the basis for the protagonist in the film *But I'm a Cheerleader*. She picked up her first pair of pompons at Rex Putnam High School in Milwaukie, where she grew up.

Stacey then went to University of Oregon, where she got involved in student government. While in Eugene she came out at 21 and met her girlfriend of 10 years, who was her "little sister" in their sorority.

After graduating Stacey moved to Salem, where she was hired an adviser to fraternities and sororities at Willamette University.

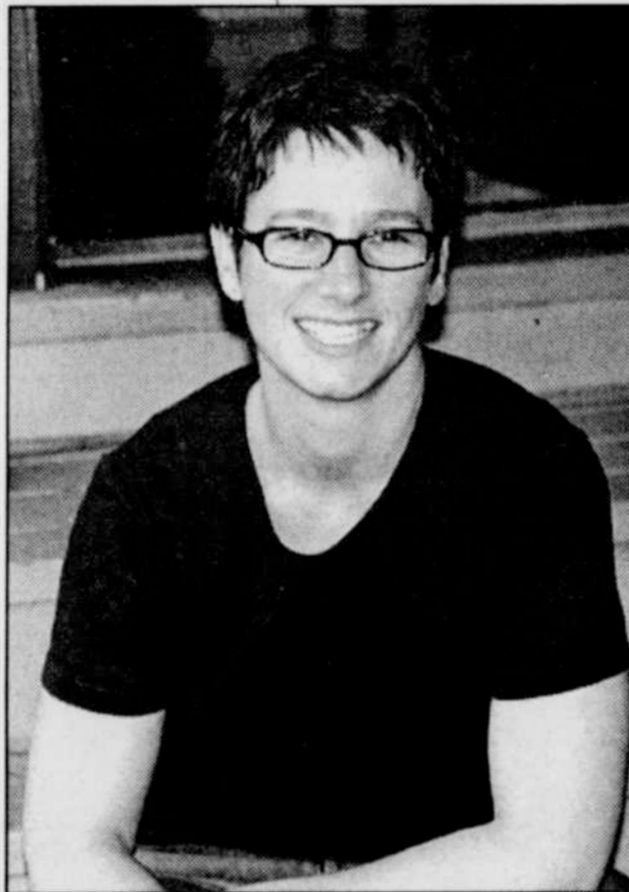


PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

Anita Stacey



Dan Yonker

There she met Brian Peterson, who wrote the script of *Cheerleader* and used her as the template.

Stacey left Willamette to pursue a master's degree at Oregon State University. She now works in marketing at a veterinary hospital.

She is close to her parents and three sisters, who all live in Portland. She and her partner, Rory, have a home in Northeast, where they live with their two dogs and three cats. Salty, Gavin, Punim and Archie are all the children the two women want at this point.

Stacey stays active with Basic Rights Oregon and has worked against both 1994's Measure 13 and 2000's Measure 9. For fun she enjoys soccer, shopping, cross-country skiing and almost anything

related to her animals. Although she is energetic and friendly, she explains she is a homebody who is dedicated to her girlfriend and pets.

For Anita Stacey, Pride is all about fun. It's also a time when our broad community can seek leadership, she says.

—NC

DAN YONKER

For a guy who's only 32, Dan Yonker already has faced a crucial life decision: Should he use his skills to promote for the forces of good or the forces of greed? In 1997 the Michigan native had been working as a certified public accountant for six years when he came to a crossroads.

"I was at a point...when I had to decide if that was going to be my career," he says. "I was experiencing some major shifts in my way of thinking how the world should be."

This was during the mid-1990s economic boom, so Yonker was seeing business owners earning huge bonuses based on the information he had provided for them. Meanwhile, he says,

their employees were struggling for increased benefits and better working conditions.

He decided to quit and head to the West Coast. He soon found himself at Yosemite National Park teaching skiing in the winter and working at a store in the summer.

"It was completely enriching," he says. "It just made me put a value on what was really important in life."

Yonker moved to Portland in November 2000 and took a cashier job at Trader Joe's. But everything changed last June when he was hired as the office manager at Basic Rights Oregon, a nonprofit that promotes equality and fights discrimination at the state level.

"Although I had vowed never, ever to do accounting again, it's for an organization that's very close to my heart and does phenomenal work...so I could not resist," he says. "We have a very small staff, and it's amazing how much we accomplish."

However inspiring his job might be, Yonker admits it's not perfect. For example, he has been surprised by gay men's general lack of interest in their political rights.

"One of the most frustrating—and the most intriguing—aspect of the job is the whole political process," he adds. "I'm not a very patient person, and working in politics sometimes takes a lot of patience."

—Jim Radosta

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