



MIRAGE OR OASIS?

Halfway between Portland
and San Francisco appears
welcome relief in Ashland

by Timothy Krause
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Knowledge is power

Prineville teen steps out of the closet
and into the spotlight BY TOM STEVENSON

Prineville's Morgan Hawes sought the wisdom of others as he tried to determine the right time to come out of the closet. He talked on the Internet and telephone to people who had made the big step. Those who spoke with him said he would know when the right time arrived.

Hawes confesses today that he did not quite understand what they were talking about. Then, the day came when he knew it was right. It was time.

He gathered his courage. He faced his classmates and teacher at Crook County High as well as some college professors who were visiting the school from Oregon Institute of Technology in Klamath Falls.

His hands shook. His voice quivered slightly. And then he spoke the words: "This is the very first time I have ever publicly admitted that I am gay."

Now an 18-year-old who is counting the days until he begins the next stage of his life—four years of studies at Linfield College's

Portland campus—Hawes recounts the day with a mixture of gratitude and glee. Few people in the small central Oregon town knew prior to the speech that he was gay.

Less than a year before, in August 2001, he came out to a close female friend. During the next several months he told a few more.

But confiding in his closest peers was one thing. Announcing it to everyone was quite another.

"I knew that support was going to swing far left or far right," Hawes says. "After the speech, the majority of the class was in tears, straight guys and girls alike.... It turns out that my most supportive people were my guy friends. They acted exactly the same around me and helped me to realize that I am not such a weirdo."



Scholarship winner Morgan Hawes (right) is congratulated by his boyfriend, Kyle Teater

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