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NORTHWEST newsbriefs



Budget cuts might result in fewer displays of the AIDS Memorial Quilt in Portland

Continued from Page 7

resulting monetary burden was too much for some chapters to bear. A total of 29 of 50 chapters since have closed, including San Francisco, the birthplace of the NAMES Project.

In March 2000, Julie Rhoad was appointed as managing director of the foundation. Although she was responsible for eliminating the organization's debt, "some of those deep cuts have come at the cost of programs and services," Bell said. At the time of the changes, "communication links between chapters and quilt operations were skeletal, if at all."

Under Rhoad's guidance, a new program was distributed at the end of 2001 that held chapters financially responsible for nearly all of the costs incurred in displaying the quilt. Chapters were given little time to look at the new contract and would be removed if they did not sign it.

"As you can imagine," Bell said, "this created a huge uproar among the chapter network. No one...understood the reasoning for the demand of signing so quickly or even agreed to the changes in the chapter program."

Although the Portland chapter did sign the contract, the financial impact has been crippling. In addition, donations have dropped off dramatically since the mid-'90s because "the general public seems tired of hearing about AIDS," according to Bell.

"We find that the Portland community is no longer very interested in the quilt," she said. At an Oct. 20 meeting, the chapter discussed closing formally by mid-2003.

The chapter needs volunteers to help with this year's World AIDS Day display during two meetings at Portland Community College's Southeast Center, 2850 S.E. 82nd Ave. Quilt inventory and distribution will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Nov. 23, and quilt return, boxing and shipping to the national office will be held from 10 a.m. to noon Dec. 14.

To volunteer call 503-797-2881.

CUTS ENDANGER SMYRC

Cascadia Behavioral HealthCare, Portland's biggest mental health agency, is facing major funding cuts from Multnomah County.

Government reimbursement rates have dropped 34 percent from \$166 per client per month to \$109, and Cascadia had to lay off more than 100 people in October. "As with many social service organizations, the future does not look too promising for public funding," said Kathy Belge, Vanguard Youth Services program manager.

Vanguard's Sexual Minorities Youth Recreation Center, one of Portland's most critical resources for queer kids, will be drastically affected

by the cuts. According to Belge, "while most programs will continue to be funded, it is SMYRC, the most utilized program and entry point for many of our other services, that is in most danger."

She said the facility always has cost more to operate than it has been able to raise. Cascadia previously has paid the deficit but will be unable to help this year; county resources are being redirected to assist those who are most severely mentally ill. Although Multnomah County has provided \$25,000 in emergency funding to SMYRC, the organization must raise \$50,000 by June 30, 2003, in order to survive.

SMYRC will be holding concerts and fundraisers, soliciting donors and writing grants in an attempt to keep this vital resource alive. Belge welcomes volunteers for the fund-raising committee or assistance with grant writing.

To make a donation call 503-872-9664, ext. 24, or e-mail kathyb@cascadiabhc.org.

**ROUNDTABLE ADDRESSES
STREET YOUTH**

The Sexual Minorities Roundtable—a partnership between the queer community, the Portland Police Bureau and the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office—will hold its next meeting from noon to 1:30 p.m. Nov. 12 at Outside In, 1132 S.W. 13th Ave.

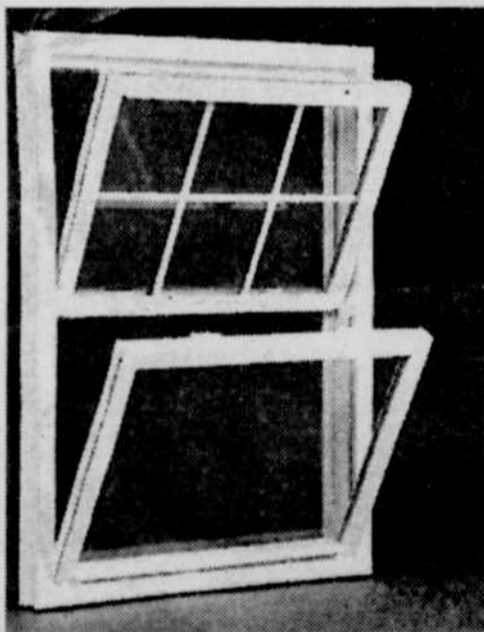
The focus of the forum will be "At-Risk Youth: Improving Law Enforcement's Relationship with Sexual Minority Street Youth." Members of the public are encouraged to attend.

Roundtable co-chairman Christopher Webster expressed concern that homeless youth, especially queer kids, "live on the margins of society [and therefore] do not feel protected by its laws.... Sexual minority street youth experience additional threats due to homophobia and ignorance, often at the hands of other homeless youth. These incidents of amplified violence, in the form of beatings, rapes and abuse, are rarely reported."

This meeting will provide an opportunity to start a dialogue between street youth and law enforcement. Webster hopes the roundtable will be able to act as an advocate for these kids in the future.

The purpose of this meeting "is to start a conversation with the people who have a history of serving street youth. We want them to tell the [roundtable] what the real issues are and help develop solutions," Webster said.

Initial goals for the meeting are to improve service provided by law enforcement to at-risk youth; increase communication and cooperation; establish an advocate for at-risk youth on the



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