

Off center

TO THE EDITOR:

I read with great interest "Breaking Common Ground" in the June 6 issue of *Just Out* about Portland's efforts to open a GLBTQ community center. Our fondest hopes go out to the group on their efforts.

Our GLBT center, the Abdill-Ellis Lambda Community Center Association, serving southern Oregon and northern California, is still alive and well, contrary to the impression given in the article. Though we did suffer financial and management setbacks a couple of years ago, our GLBT support and social organization is still surviving, but admittedly at a much-reduced (downsized) scale.

We are now subsisting on an annual budget about one-tenth of what we had in our "heyday" period. It seems to be a new fact of life, for whatever the total reasons, that it has become a lot more difficult to play host to such a center or group.

It is not only true of our type of groups but is true of so many other nonprofit groups or organizations. Our local Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays group recently disbanded, for the most part, for many of the same "lack of support" reasons. Physical and financial support is now much harder to come by, for whatever those reasons are.

To me, it sometimes begs the question: Is it that much easier for individuals to get the support and information they need and to "be out," and have we outlived much of that greater need we once knew? Our center board of directors remains convinced we need to survive for the newbies and newcomers "out there" needing our help and the continuing need for public outreach.

Also, there is a very obvious, seemingly growing need to help our youths. And though

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Clean and safe. Coffee is available. Library is available. It has the capacity to play host to venues. It's a place that you aren't embarrassed to bring your friends to. It has a large-screen television for film groups. A good example is the center in Salt Lake City.

BARB SOHA
Hillsboro

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It would have a staff that could help people locate the resources available to the GLBT community, info on HIV, something for the seniors and possibly a cafe. I think it should be located near MAX and bus service and be centrally located.

CAROL PRICE
Vancouver, Wash.

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Support groups: Alcoholics Anonymous, AIDS/HIV, survivors of someone who has passed, trans, family planning. Everyday classes: job readiness and bulletin boards, résumé, tutoring for those in college and below, STD prevention, singles counseling, couples counseling and family counseling. Outings: camping, hiking, beach trips, movies, barbecues, picnics, baseball, basketball, arts and crafts, theater. Atmosphere: modern, fun, laid back, big kitchen, comfortable couches, big library with lots of books, television room, pool table, basketball/tennis court, swimming pool, hot tubs, saunas, tanning rooms, private rooms for conferences and counseling, wheelchair accessible and a big stage and dressing rooms for those wonderful drag performances.

we are limited by our type of nonprofit status, there are the continuing political battles to fight.

We hope to continue to survive and somehow grow our numbers back slowly. We will be more cautious about our funding sources; we do find we will have to rely more on membership and donations fees, as grant programs are becoming much more competitive. We also strongly value our GLBT-oriented library, one of the larger ones in the state, and wish to keep it available to all the public.

VICKI RAE
Abdill-Ellis Lambda Community Center
Association Secretary

Shame on U.S.

TO THE EDITOR:

I sent this letter to President Bush, U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith and the Republican Party in response to an article about the U.S. Justice Department's decision to cancel its Pride event:

I am saddened and angered at this completely unnecessary and malicious act against a specific segment of employees. I am reminded that gay and lesbian citizens raised exactly these concerns when John Ashcroft was nominated as U.S. attorney general, and we were assured that our fears were based more in politics than reality.

I find this adversarial action not only anti-freedom but anti-Republican. The Republican Party is the party of the open door. Ours is the party of liberty, the party of equality of opportunity for all and favoritism for none (Preamble, Republican Party Rules). It is a contradiction to claim you're "protecting freedom and personal liberty" from taxation and governmental regulation, only to impinge on the most personal of freedoms—love and family—through governmental policy.

It should also have resources to other agencies that may help people who come to the center. It should be for every queer of every age, and it should be kept that way. Straight people have their own centers for a reason.

SARAH (SAM) KLEAMES
Portland

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There are more than a few GLB youngsters out there with no one to turn to, no resources to depend on and no communities that they can call "home." More than one disparaging teen/young adult have I encountered who feels utterly alone. If there were a community center, there would certainly have to be "mentors" available to such youth (and us "grownups" as well) and a community board or message system. Everyone needs the reassurance that they are not alone in the world, and we are certainly no different.

Location? Anywhere close to a major bus line/MAX, so that everyone has access to the facility without having to ask for a ride.

SARA GATES
Tualatin

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Location? Central to metro Portland area, next to MAX with outreach centers.

Ultimate? Top priorities? Me! And my partner, you and your partner, all of us! Singles, doubles, male, female, both, undecided. We are the foundation—we need to get together and build ourselves a home. A place to learn, to laugh, to win the race before the rat, to be the "minority" that effects positive change in the community.

It's embarrassing to admit to out-of-area

You all ought to be ashamed! I know I am ashamed of you.

ROBERT M. TOPOLSKI
Hillsboro

We are PFLAG

TO THE EDITOR:

You have watched us as we march past you in the parade—you cheered or may have cried. Perhaps you or one of your family got needed support as one of you struggled with coming out. We are moms, dads, spouses, children, sisters, brothers and even grandparents. We are straight, bi, questioning, gay, lesbian and transgendered. We are PFLAG!

My partner and I walked in the parade with Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays again this year and worked the booth at Pride. We heard wonderful words of support and praise from many of you. I encourage you to check out the monthly meetings and get involved. It is an incredibly rewarding experience.

JIM MORRIS
Portland

correction

The June 6 article "Breaking Common Ground" listed the wrong date for the Portland queer community center's next Speak Out Forum. The meeting will be held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. July 1 in the Community Center Room at St. Andrew Church, 806 N.E. Alberta St. For more information call 503-535-3815, e-mail portlandqueercenter@yahoo.com or write to P.O. Box 1682, Portland, OR 97207. *Just Out* regrets the error.

friends that there is no center in Portland—no combination free library, drop-in clinic, one-to-one hot line and legal aid desk that sponsors softball leagues and camping trips and shows lifestyle movies every other Tuesday. We have empty buildings, we have willing bodies, why don't we have a center?

DAWN CRANDALL
Beaverton

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Getting straight to the point, I think one main priority is catering to youth. Queer youth need a safe place to hang out, congregate and, above all, have fun. I also think the community center should offer safe-sex courses and resources such as condoms.

Another top priority is getting gay men and lesbians to congregate together. I think queer men and women should spend more time together and not separate hangouts by the sex of individuals. Lastly, resources, information and programs for bisexuals also need to be offered.

APRIL M. DORSEY
Trousdale

next issue

Ontario legalizes same-sex marriage: Are you planning on trekking to Toronto and getting hitched? Do you predict the United States will recognize the union once you cross the border? (Please see related item on Page 23.) Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)

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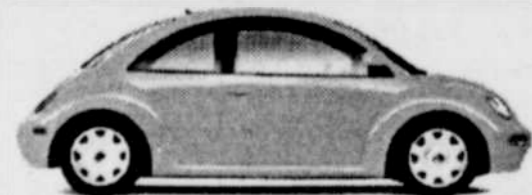
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