

NORTHWEST news

are often ridiculed and gawked at by uneducated and unruly audiences. "T-Talk" turns the format on its head, transforming it into an engaging way to impart accurate information.

This innovative idea was pioneered by Kevan Gardner, regional outreach director for Seattle's Pride Foundation, and, according to Botzer, "in his drag persona, a most impressive interviewer." Gardner's alter ego is Auntie Bijou, or properly Bijou Matinee, which is French for "jewel of the afternoon."

Botzer says this approach has been used several times before across the country and has proved a resounding success. "It's an excellent tool, a way to make a presentation about gender which could be fairly perfunctory into a fun experience for people of different backgrounds."

Interspersed throughout the discussion will be creative musical numbers featuring Auntie Bijou singing—not lip-syncing—"all aimed at making a point, such as the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation," Botzer explains. In addition to discussion about the many ways people explore and question gender, resources will be available about the treatments and other options available for helping people transition between genders and the processes involved, up to and including surgery.

Another queer-related event at the conference is "Gender Justice," which will be presented by Bowman and trans activist Ari Rapkin. According to Rapkin, this workshop will make an attempt at "unraveling sexism, queer oppression and trans oppression—looking at the three of those and how they're related."

Roey Thorpe, Basic Rights Oregon executive director, will be leading a seminar for executive directors of nonprofits to help them face the specific challenges of being in charge.

"Being in leadership means you're always vis-

ible to the community, and everyone has an opinion on what you're doing," she explains. "Often people in the community have a lot more advice than they have compassion. This is an opportunity to talk to one another...to share experiences and coping skills."

CSTI's reputation had reached Thorpe before she moved to Portland from New York. She attended the event in 2001, shortly after taking on the leadership of BRO.

"Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues get connected to other parts of the social movement," Thorpe says. "GLBT people get challenged about other issues, non-GLBT people get challenged by GLBT issues."

The cross-pollination across the progressive movement taking place at CSTI is key to the continued success of the conference. In a nutshell, Thorpe explains the value of the event:

"At times it can seem that the problems we are trying to solve and the power structures we're trying to dismantle just get stronger every day. At times it seems like you're in it all by yourself, and it's difficult to know who to turn to for help. They offer an opportunity to do some professional development—and you could get that a lot of different places—but to do it in an environment that explicitly values the work that participants are doing is a rare opportunity." □

Western States Center's COMMUNITY STRATEGIC TRAINING INITIATIVE will be held from Aug. 1 to 3 at Reed College. For more information call 503-228-8866, ext. 104, or e-mail moirab@wscpd.org.

MICHAEL BURDICK is a recent graduate of Reed College. He can be reached at mike@nubblicious.com.



Social justice activists participate in a workshop at CSTI 2002

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