

SCOUT'S DISHONOR

A gay father filed a formal complaint Sept. 17 with Portland Public Schools alleging that the district creates a hostile learning environment for his children by supporting the Boy Scouts of America.

Steve Wagenhoffer and his partner, Mitchell Zahn, have two sons, 9-year-old Alex and 8-year-old Scott, who attend Jim Bridger Elementary School in Southeast Portland. On Sept. 5 both students were handed Boy Scouts recruitment literature to bring home with them.

The full-color, 11-page brochure included the Scout oath, in which boys promise to "do my best to do my duty to God and my country and...to keep myself...morally straight." The Irving, Texas-based nonprofit organization bans gay Scouts and gay Scout leaders.

"It's just taken a heavy toll emotionally," Wagenhoffer told *Just Out*. "It's caused a lot of conflict with my kids."

When a student harassed Alex about his family's opposition to the Boy Scouts, Wagenhoffer said he came home from school Sept. 11 angry, confused and upset. "He then had an emotional meltdown and curled up in a fetal position and sobbed hysterically."

In the complaint Wagenhoffer cites policies requiring the district to recognize "the diversity and worth of all individuals and

groups and their roles in society" and to treat them "with fairness in all activities, programs and operations, without regard to...sexual orientation." He wants Portland Public Schools to comply with their own policies and to put their words into action.

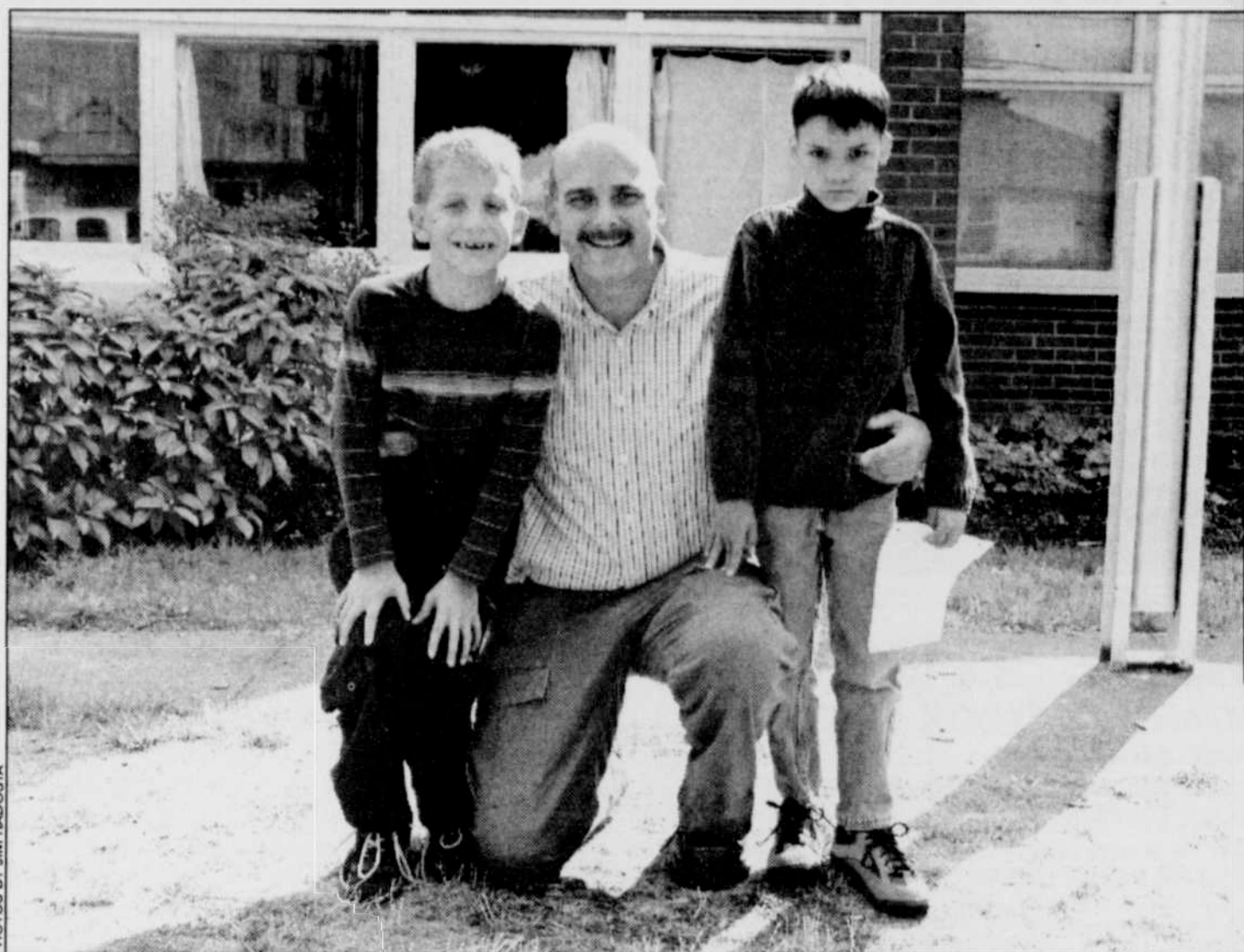
"It is inconceivable that the district chooses to marginalize and discriminate against my children, my family and others like it by allowing exceptions to a prejudiced organization such as the BSA," he wrote in the complaint. "It is intolerable and unacceptable that my children

be subjected to the efforts of the BSA at school.... It is the mission of PPS to provide my children with a safe, respectful, comfortable and inclusive environment in which to learn—free of the bigotry, homophobia and exclusion the BSA have adeptly come to represent."

District spokesman Lew Frederick said that the Scouts literature should not have been sent home with students but that the group is allowed to place materials on campus. He blamed the incident on a clerical error.

"Sometimes we have new people in new positions who don't know about those policies and haven't read everything," Frederick said. "Some people do make mistakes, and that was a mistake."

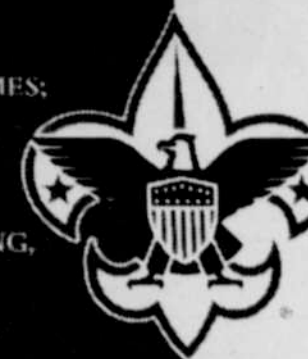
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Steve Wagenhoffer says the school district is creating a hostile learning environment for his sons, Scott (left) and Alex, by sending them home with literature from the Boy Scouts of America (inset)

PHOTOS BY JIM RADOSTA

ON MY HONOR I WILL
DO MY BEST TO DO MY
DUTY TO GOD AND MY
COUNTRY AND TO
OBEY THE SCOUT LAW;
TO HELP OTHER
PEOPLE AT ALL TIMES;
TO KEEP MYSELF
PHYSICALLY STRONG,
MENTALLY AWAKE,
AND MORALLY STRAIGHT.



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