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NORTHWEST newsbriefs

Continued from Page 7



According to the Rev. Tara Wilkins, an Oct. 14 forum will address the difference between civil marriage and religious marriage

COMMUNITY FORUM TO TALK OF GAY MARRIAGE

"Beyond the Veil: Faith and Civil Rights," a forum organized by representatives from Portland's progressive religious community to discuss implications of same-sex marriage, will meet from 7 to 9 p.m. Oct. 14 at First United Methodist Church, 1838 S.W. Jefferson St.

The Rev. Tara Wilkins of Ainsworth United Church of Christ, who serves as chairwoman of the Community of Welcoming Congregations, says the event grew out of cooperation among various denominations that organized the Love Welcomes All conference last June. Since then, gay marriage has become a greater political issue, and each denomination is struggling with how to handle it.

One tactic the forum will address, Wilkins says, is to separate the civil and religious aspects of marriage, similar to many European models.

"Lots of church folk don't realize that there's a difference between civil marriage and religious marriage, and one of the things we want to highlight is how they're different," Wilkins told *Just Out*. "The idea of civil marriage is more of a justice issue—gays and lesbians being allowed the same civil rights that straight couples are allowed. Then we can deal with our institutional religious battles in a different place."

She says this approach helps focus on implications specific to each aspect of marriage, both church and state. "In a lot of ways, it takes the sting out of some of the religious discussions because

we're able to work on a justice issue oriented toward civil rights and equality, and then the authorities in each of the denominations can struggle whether or not to acknowledge the civil union."

Other program components will describe efforts communities of faith have made on other issues, such as suffrage, racism and labor relations. Presenters will challenge apathy and ignorance within faith communities when it comes to sexual minority issues and provide examples of positive action among faith communities, demonstrating how religious organizations can be agents of social change. Central to the event will be time for open discussion, and at least one attorney will be on hand to address specifically legal questions.

The event is organized by Basic Rights Oregon; Portland Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays; Rose City Park Presbyterian Church; Love Makes a Family; and the Community of Welcoming Congregations, which represents 43 churches and synagogues across the Portland metropolitan area.

For more information call 503-222-6151 or visit www.basicrights.org.

SHIBLEY ADVISES PROGRAM TO MENTOR WOMEN LEADERS

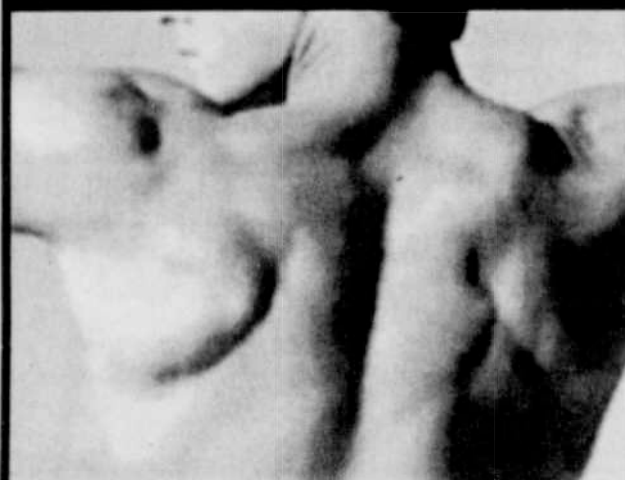
Former state Rep. Gail Shibley, Oregon's first openly queer legislator, has joined the advisory board of a nationally recognized program to find, mentor and train future women leaders.

National Education for Women's Leadership Oregon will create and host a six-day training program at Portland State University every summer to introduce college women to public leadership. Those chosen will be taught and mentored by many past and current women officeholders, including Shibley, who now serves as administrator of Oregon's Office of Public Health Systems.

"This program is unique because it demystifies the political realm and its occupants and because it gives women the hands-on training necessary to lead," said Melody Rose, NEW Leadership Oregon executive director and a political science professor at the Mark O. Hatfield School of Government at the College of Urban and Public Affairs. "Women are currently underrepresented in state and national government, so we look forward to creating leaders excited about adding their voice to the process."

NEW Leadership is patterned after a project created 12 years ago at the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University in New Jersey. The program is designed to educate, empower and encourage college women to become politically active and take on leadership roles on their campuses and in their communities. It has extended to schools in five other

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