

just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

FOUNDED 1983 • JAY BROWN AND RENÉE LACHANCE
Vol. 21 No. 1 November 7, 2003

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Letters to the editor should be limited to 500 words. Announcements regarding life transitions (births, deaths, unions, etc.) should be limited to 200 words; photos are welcome. **Deadline for submissions** to the editorial department and for the **Calendar** is the Thursday 15 days before the next publication date. Views expressed in letters to the editor, columns and features are not necessarily those of the publisher.

The **display advertising deadline** is the Monday 12 days before the next publication date.

Classified ads must be received at the *Just Out* office by 4 p.m. on the Thursday eight days before the next publication date, along with payment. Ads may be placed by telephone or via the Internet with Visa or MasterCard payment.

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Subscriptions are \$22.50 for 12 issues. First Class (in an envelope) is \$40 for 12 issues.

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COMMENTARY

BY MARTY DAVIS

No longer a teen-ager

As *Just Out* turns 20, we need your feedback to bridge the generation gap

You're holding in your hands a symbol of 20 years of gay and lesbian culture and history from Portland and our greater readership area. You're holding in your hands our proud accomplishment, the 20th anniversary issue of *Just Out*.

The images on our cover reflect many, though far from all, aspects of our personal and community lives as presented in the pages of *Just Out* during the past two decades. And while there are symbols of sensuality and sexuality and frivolity, no single image is infused with the power to grab you, pull you in and sear you with the pain, grief and suffering caused by 20 years of AIDS.

And while there are buttons and stickers that bring back memories of our political wars and our hard-won victories, no image speaks to the emotional and financial tolls that these battles extracted from our community.

The images on the cover show where we've been and, to some extent, where we are now. But these images can't look forward for us and can't show us where we're going. We can look back together, but the question now is, "Do we still have the ability to look forward and to plan and to grow together?"

This question brings us to where we are today: the celebration of 20 years of *Just Out*. I can't speak to, or for, the first 15 years of the paper, as I wasn't here. But I did faithfully read *Just Out*, and it was an important part of my own personal coming-out process and maturation. So important, in fact, that five years ago when the offer was presented, I went against all logic, advice and sense to become the publisher and owner. Pretty much every day since, my waking thought has been, "Good God, what have I done?" To say it's been an interesting five years would be quite an understatement. Indeed, the highs have been high and the lows have been, well, pretty damn low.

Where an astute businessperson might have brought skills, experience and knowledge to his or her new investment, I lugged in instead temper, inexperience, insensitivity and false bravado. Boy, talk about your lesbian baggage. At the 15th anniversary party for *Just Out*, my first public event, I recall then news reporter Inga Sorenson pointing out to me that Sam Adams was prominently seated in the first row. My response: "Who's Sam Adams?" Shortly thereafter I was summoned to lunch by Adams, who expressed a clear interest in knowing exactly who was I and what my plans were for this vital community asset. I'm pleased that in the ensuing five years he hasn't felt it necessary to call me back in.

The community has shown great interest in our milestone anniversary,

and there have been interviews and discussions and lots of questions asked of me. One frequent question has been, "What are you proudest of at *Just Out*?" There are several answers that come to mind, but two stand out now as the most important.

The single biggest accomplishment of the past five years has been bringing together the current staff. Editorial, production and sales—all aspects of the paper are staffed by seasoned, dedicated and accomplished employees. The quality of their work is reflected in every issue of this paper. Each first and third Friday you are presented with a noble accomplishment.

Secondly, I'm proud of the fact that I work in a segment of the media that does not fall prey to such manipulations as November "sweeps." I'm proud that the cover of the 20th anniversary issue of *Just Out* did not have

to feature the likeness of Ward Weaver to ensure good ratings and ongoing sponsorship dollars. I'm proud that *Just Out* doesn't sink to the depths of *Average Joe* in order to lure readers. I'm proud that my audience does not require pandering to the lowest intellect level possible. I'm damn proud of this paper, the staff who produce it and the readers who perpetuate it.

Not being held prisoner of a ratings system does not, however, imply that *Just Out* is unaware or unsolicitous of the needs and interests of our readers. To the contrary, we are deeply vested in the concepts of

responsiveness, growth and adaptability. As such we look to our readers to tell us what they like and what they don't. We need to know what's working for you and what isn't. If you don't read us now, what will it take to bring you to our pages? We realize that at our 20th anniversary we are straddling the generation gap between our original readers and those who are new or waiting to be won over. Now we need to bring in the next generation of readers—the ones who'll take us to and through the next 20 years. It's our task—our mission—to bridge this gap.

And this brings us to the *Just Out* reader survey insert that is lurking in the pages of this very paper that you're reading, unless of course it's fallen on the floor. (Over there by the umbrella stand, perhaps?) Anyway, we are very serious about wanting to hear from you. It's easier than in the past. No envelope required, no newsprint on your hand—and if you want to save the 37-cent stamp you can complete the survey online at www.justout.com.

Thanks for being with us all or part of the past 20 years. Now tell us what we need to do to keep you around for 20 more. ☐

We need to know what's working for you and what isn't. If you don't read us now, what will it take to bring you to our pages?

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Clockwise from top left: Marie Fleischmann, Erin Sexton-Sayler, Marty Davis, Timothy Krause, Kevin Moore, Larry Lewis, Jim Radosta, Pam Colton, Lisa Bradshaw, Zanne deJanvier

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