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AIDS. As a result, Medicaid is their single largest source of insurance, providing access to physician visits, hospitalization, prescription drugs, home health care and long-term care. More than half of all people with AIDS and 90 percent of children with AIDS rely on Medicaid benefits for their health care.

Current Medicaid eligibility requirements are so strict that thousands of low-income people living with HIV are unable to qualify for the program until they become disabled by AIDS. Childless adults living with HIV typically only qualify for Medicaid coverage once they become eligible for Social Security. Because people are not eligible for Social Security until they become disabled, those with asymptomatic HIV infections are not eligible for Medicaid until their conditions have progressed to full-blown AIDS.

Since these people do not qualify for Medicaid, they lack the critical ability to receive medical care and medicine to help slow the progression of the disease and prevent the onset of opportunistic infections. Smith's legislation would give them early access to care and treatment.

Treating people with HIV early in the progression of the disease has numerous benefits, according to HRC. By providing therapeutics earlier, costs will decrease and the number of new HIV infections will decline because of lower viral loads. In addition, the AIDS Drug Assistance Program will be able to provide care to more people with HIV because of savings. Most importantly, the quality of life for countless HIV-positive people will improve.

In a report titled *AIDS—No Time to Spare*, the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS supported expansion of Medicaid for those living with HIV. It called on the Bush administration to remove barriers that states encounter in efforts to expand eligibility.

HRC suggests people send letters urging members of Congress to co-sponsor the act. It recommends that supporters include personal stories about how HIV/AIDS has directly affected their lives to make the correspondence more compelling.

KLUB Z CLOSES

Klub Z, the only all-ages queer nightclub in Portland, unexpectedly closed its doors Dec. 18.

The venue, located at 333 S.W. Park Ave., was a popular place where gay, lesbian, bi, trans and questioning youth could dance, watch go-go boys and enjoy events such as drag queen wrestling and, every March, the Rosebud and Thorn Pageant, the longest-running teen drag celebration in the world. The good news is that owner Zig Tognietti promises that the change is not permanent and that the club will reopen someday.

"The truth be told, it was time to move. Time for a change. I didn't plan on making that change until after Jan. 1, but my hand was forced to do so earlier. While I regret doing so in such fashion and without warning, I think that when Z comes back, everyone will like it much better," Tognietti announced on the club's Web site. "There will be a lot of changes at the new Z, but I am confident that...Klub Z will live on and continue to be a fun safe place where Oregon and Washington youth can hang out and just be themselves."

Tognietti says he has received a large amount of correspondence from queer kids who believe they would have committed suicide if they hadn't discovered his club.

"Klub Z was and is about the gay youth, not about me," he wrote on the Web site. "It is a good feeling to know that because of Klub Z and a lot of its patrons...some of these kids that have written to me are still alive."



PHOTO BY MARY DAVIS

A reveler strikes a pose during Lane County Pride 2002; this year's celebration will be held Aug. 1 at Alton Baker Park

EUGENE PRIDE PLANNED

Lane County Pride 2004 might be seven months away, but organizers already are getting together to make sure the event goes off without a hitch.

Committee meetings will be held from 1 to 3 p.m. on the first Sunday of the month through June 6 at the Eugene Water & Electric Board Community Room, 500 E. Fourth Ave. The group will then take a two-month break and resume the schedule Sept. 5.

Lane County Pride will be held from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Aug. 1 at Alton Baker Park. More details will be announced as the date approaches.

For more information e-mail vendor coordinator Jeremiah Megowan at jer_128@yahoo.com.

MARCH FOR PEACE, JUSTICE

Sisters of the Road Café will hold its 12th annual Martin Luther King Day March for Peace and Justice on Jan. 19. As in past years, participants will gather 5:30 p.m. in two separate neighborhoods and convene into one unified group at the Oregon Convention Center's statue of King.

The Northwest march will begin at Sisters of the Road Café, 133 N.W. Sixth Ave., head over the Burnside Bridge and then turn north on Northeast Grand Avenue. The Northeast route will begin at Legacy Emanuel Hospital's Lorenzen Conference Center, 301 N. Graham Ave., march through the neighborhood and head south on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

Both of the marches are scheduled to begin at 6 p.m., connecting at the King memorial and jointly continuing to the Portland Conference Center, 300 N.E. Multnomah St., for a celebration of King's life, snacks and an opportunity to meet new friends. Drawing on the slain civil rights leader's attention to issues of poverty and inequality, as well as his fervent anti-war activism, this event celebrates the persistence of those who advocate for peace and social change through nonviolent activism.

Sisters of the Road is a nonprofit restaurant open to the public that encourages all customers, staff, volunteers and donors to get to know each

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