

Continued from Page 11

WHERE IS SHE NOW?

Donna Red Wing, who served as executive director of the Lesbian Community Project from 1989 to 1993, announced March 18 that she is running for the Colorado General Assembly. The Democrat most recently served as queer outreach director for former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean's presidential campaign.

"Howard Dean taught us that it was time that we take back America, and we are beginning with Colorado House District 25," Red Wing said. "Coloradoans are tired of the status quo."

For more information e-mail
VoteForRedWing@aol.com or visit
www.donnaredwing.com.

PROJECT WILL BOOST VOTER REGISTRATION

The Basic Rights Education Fund has joined more than 30 nonprofit organizations in kicking off a project that seeks to register new voters in traditionally underrepresented communities.

The Voter Expansion Project involves tribes, low-income service groups and organizations representing different people of color constituencies. It is committed to registering 30,000 new or lapsed voters by October.

"There was a time when people got on buses, marched and rallied for the right to vote," Oregon Secretary of State Bill Bradbury said in a statement. "We must ensure that every generation and every community values and exercises this most precious right."

Other participating community groups include the Rural Organizing Project, Urban League and Oregon Food Bank. Oregon Action—which has worked for more than 25 years to address issues of economic and social justice, living wages, health care and affordable housing—is providing coordination and support.

"I'm really excited about the opportunity to build long-term relations with community-based organizations that are doing incredible work," said Rose Spears, president of Oregon Action's Portland chapter. "This is a historic moment with all these groups coming together. There has always been a push for voter registration, but I have never seen this type of early cooperation."

LESBIAN MINISTER FOUND NOT GUILTY

After deliberating for a day and a half, a United Methodist jury found a lesbian minister not guilty March 20 of charges that she violated church law by coming out of the closet in 2001. The trial took place in the Seattle suburb of Bothell.

"While sustaining the specification that Rev. Karen Dammann is a self-avowed practicing homosexual, we, the trial court, do not find the evidence presented...to be clear and convincing that [she] has engaged in any 'practices declared by the United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings,'" said the jury chairwoman, the Rev. Judy Schultz. "We cannot sustain the charge."

As the verdict was read, Dammann quietly bowed her head. The woman she married last month in Portland, Meredith Savage, placed an



The Rev. Karen Dammann awaits the jury's verdict March 20 in Bothell, Wash.

arm around her shoulders. An audible sigh rippled around the courtroom, but no verbal reactions were heard.

Of the 13-member jury, 11 voted not guilty and two were undecided. A majority of nine was necessary to render a verdict.

Dammann, pastor of Ellensburg United Methodist Church, was charged with violating a rule prohibiting the ordination or appointment of pastors who acknowledge homosexual practice. Her saga began Feb. 14, 2001, when she informed her bishop, "I am living in a partnered, covenanted, homosexual relationship."

Dammann then acknowledged in a letter to her clergy colleagues: "I have 'come out....'

I have found I can no longer live the life of a closeted lesbian clergyperson."

According to Larry Fox of the Reconciling Ministries Network, church doctrine is in conflict with itself. With the exception of two sentences that ban the appointment of gay men and lesbians as clergy, the Book of Discipline calls for inclusivity and equal rights for sexual minorities.

Dammann is only the second

United Methodist clergyperson ever to face a church trial on the charge of being a "self-avowed practicing homosexual." The Rev. Rose Mary Denmam of New Hampshire lost her 1988 case and subsequently transferred to another denomination.

Although the church cannot appeal the verdict, the trial will not settle the larger issue of homosexuality for the denomination. That will continue to be debated at its worldwide law and policymaking body, the 1,000-member General Conference, which will meet from April 27 to May 7 in Pittsburgh. **JM**

Compiled by JIM RADOSTA



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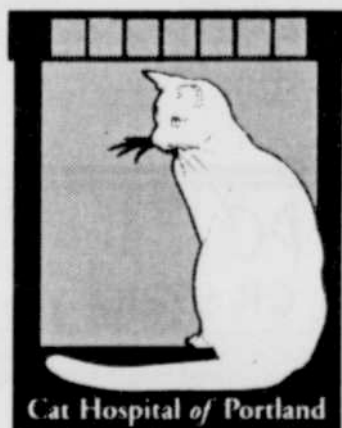


Greg Look

3550 Liberty Rd. S^{STE 230}
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