

## NORTHWEST newsbriefs

### SILENCE IS GOLDEN

About 40 queers and allies confronted the followers of the Rev. Fred Phelps on April 18 outside Portland State University.

The Kansas preacher, who operates the Web site GodHatesFags.com, staged the demonstration to protest same-sex marriage. Although Phelps was nowhere to be seen, about eight of his followers showed up, singing "America, the Beautiful" while dragging two U.S. flags on the ground and holding signs that read, "Fags Eat Feces," "Repent or Perish" and "Thank God for Sept. 11."

Across the street, the counter-protesters remained silent. United Sexualities, a queer-positive club at Lewis & Clark College, turned the Phelps appearance into a pledge drive, asking sponsors to donate money to the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center for every minute of the picket.

"The silence worked," said Earl A. Coffman, Mr. Oregon State Leather 2003, who organized the counterprotest. "Nothing was being said to them and we weren't reacting to them vocally, so they lost all the steam they had built up. They were only there for 30 minutes, but you could see the dejection on their faces when they left.... [We] faced them silently and proved that when bullies—and to me they are bullies—do not get a reaction, they have nothing to feed off of and they look like fools."



Counterprotesters confront the Rev. Fred Phelps' followers (inset) April 18 outside Portland State University

Bolles notes that lesbian newcomers to Portland often make LCP their first stop. "I think it's important that when you open the phone book you can find the word 'lesbian,'" she says.

LCP and its sister organization, the Community Education Project, will hold a joint public board meeting 7 p.m. May 10 at the LCP office, which is located in Suite 253 at 800 N.W. Sixth Ave. Those interested in LCP membership are encouraged to attend.

For more information call 503-227-0605, e-mail [lcp@xpnt.net](mailto:lcp@xpnt.net) or visit [www.xpnt.net/~lcp](http://www.xpnt.net/~lcp).

### LESBIAN COMMUNITY PROJECT SETS OUT NEXT STEPS

The Lesbian Community Project held a general meeting April 24 to discuss the future of the organization, which has faced a number of recent challenges.

The meeting, which took place at the downtown YWCA, had a low turnout, according to board member Alyson Bolles. The 28-year-old attributes the weak attendance to the urgency behind the call to meet. "People were scared...they would get roped into a big thing."

However, demanding unwieldy involvement from members was not the purpose, Bolles says. Instead, the meeting served as a strategy session for the organization's next steps. The 16 attendees were firmly behind the continuation of the nearly 20-year-old nonprofit, including its newsletter, annual softball tournament, New Year's Eve dance and bimonthly discussion groups. Additional future projects will be determined by members.

"In order to do more, we need more people," says Bolles, who has served on the board for more than a year.

One issue facing the member-driven organization is a series of recent resignations, including Jamie Bolyard, who stepped down as executive director in March. Several board members also have stepped down, leaving Bolles and Donna Luckett to run the organization.

Bolles believes LCP may be experiencing lower membership interest because "other [queer] organizations are stepping up" on important issues.

She also thinks the rise in lesbian families may be a factor as new mothers become too busy to attend meetings.

But it is clear to Bolles and others that LCP still serves a vital purpose in Portland. "We get calls every day," she told *Just Out*.

### PFLAG PORTLAND GEARS UP FOR ELECTION YEAR

The Portland chapter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbian and Gays will hold a planning meeting from 7 to 9 p.m. May 11 at First United Methodist Church, 1838 S.W. Jefferson St. The gathering will start with the regular format small "rap" groups and will conclude with a facilitated discussion on how to prepare for the upcoming election season.

"What we see coming is some sort of anti-gay initiative," PFLAG member Jim Morris told *Just Out*. His husband, Richard Colombo, serves on the Portland PFLAG board.

"In the past, like many organizations, we've been reactive, responding to the latest thing," Morris says. He hopes PFLAG can get ahead of the ball this year and strategize in advance of possible upcoming battles with anti-gay forces.

Morris says family voices are particularly effective when talking to legislators, who tend to hear from a standard set of activists and lobbyists. He notes that hearing "the words of parents talking about their fears and dreams" for their queer children makes a big impact.

Meeting organizers also hope to engage more Portlanders in the organization. Morris says one of the myths about PFLAG is that it is only for parents or family members of queer people. Nearly half of the Portland PFLAG membership is queer.

"What I would love to see," Morris says, "is that each one of us [in the queer community] would reach out to family and friends in Portland and get them involved."

Updates on activities can be found at [www.pflagpdx.org](http://www.pflagpdx.org).



### PRIDE NORTHWEST, CLUBS HOST AWARENESS EVENTS

Pride Northwest—the nonprofit organization that produces Portland's annual gay, lesbian, bi and trans festival and parade—will host awareness events throughout May at four queer venues:

- **Silverado:** 3 to 9 p.m. May 9 at 1217 S.W. Stark St.
- **C.C. Slaughters:** 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. May 14 at 219 N.W. Davis St.
- **Panorama/Boxxes:** 7 p.m. to midnight May 23 at 1035 S.W. Stark St.
- **Egyptian Club:** 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. May 27 at 3701 S.E. Division St.

Attendees will find out what's in store for this year, including who the entertainers, keynote speakers and grand marshal will be. They also can sign up for a volunteer shift, make a donation to support Portland Pride 2004, register their organization as a parade contingent and reserve a festival booth.

Pride Northwest and several Portland Pride 2004 sponsors will provide entertainment, door prizes, special guests and much more. Cover charges may apply; proceeds benefit Pride Northwest.

The Pride Festival takes place from noon to 11 p.m. June 19 and from noon to 6 p.m. June 20 at Waterfront Park. The Pride Parade steps off at 11:15 a.m. June 20 in the Pearl District, heads down Southwest Stark Street and winds through Old Town.

For more information call 503-295-9788 or visit [www.pridenw.org](http://www.pridenw.org).

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