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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.

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Speaking out

From the AIDSWalk to the election, make your voice heard

Kudos to Thomas Bruner, executive director of Cascade AIDS Project, and his entire organizing committee for the successful staging of AIDSWalk04. The number of participants was substantially greater than in recent years, and the amount of money raised was equivalently higher. Corporate sponsorship was crucial to the success of this event, as well as the turnout of friends, neighbors and families of those whose lives have been affected by the disease.

It was especially encouraging to see a large presence of younger participants taking their place among the walkers. Teens were everywhere—some straight, some queer, some from the city, some from the suburbs. While lacking visible commonality, all were seemingly aware that this all-inclusive disease shows no regard for age, nor respect for racial, cultural, economic or geographic boundaries. As always, the Sunday morning crowd was largely white, yet not so much as in the past.

There were drag queens in high heels; there were clowns with balloons. There were children in massive SUV-ish strollers, and of course there were big dogs, little dogs and then more dogs. There was an overall festive spirit of good will. Many familiar faces were spotted in the throng of walkers, like Kevin Cook, aka Poison Waters. But wouldn't it be great to see even more community present for AIDSWalk05? Think of the impact if all the teams from the Rose City Softball Association walked together in their uniforms. If the teams from the Friday and Sunday bowling leagues organized themselves and participated, AIDSWalk would soon outgrow Pioneer Square.

Stories were told and spirits lifted by the signs people carried. Banners were held high and proud, and pictures of loved ones were carried in memory and tribute. A contingent of folks, including city spokeswoman Mary Volm and former Commissioner Mike Lindberg, wore signs and photos honoring the life and memory of much-revered Keeston Lowery.

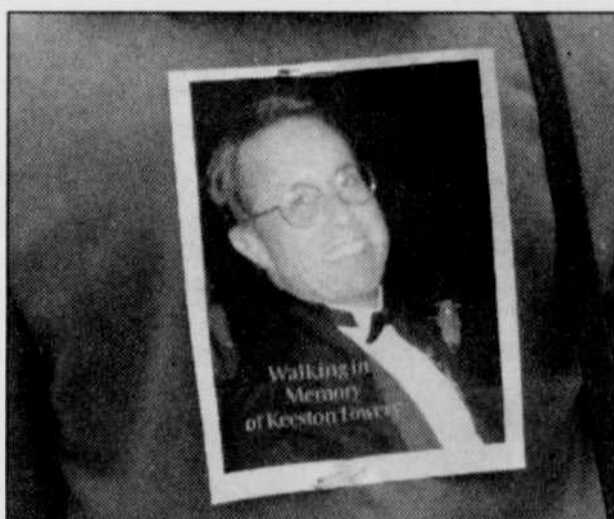


PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

Late last month, the city of Portland announced dynamic and exciting new plans for the downtown Park Blocks, a project that will bring new development and progress closer yet to the 10th and Stark and Burnside area. I find myself wondering how this new "Park Avenue" will affect the decaying Burnside Triangle. What happened to the studies, the meetings, the findings and the plans for this area? Where are the walking tours, the Burnside Triangle Advisory Group and the grandiose plans for a cultural district? With urban renewal encroaching from the north and now from the east, what does the future hold for the establishments serving gay clientele on Stark Street? With upscale condos planned for long-deserted hotels, producing a stream of folks accessing services, restaurants and entertainment in the Pearl, does anyone really think that Stark Street and her patrons will be left to continue in the current fashion? And what exactly will be the location of that oft-talked about new LGBTQ community center? What happened to those plans? Where do they fit into the city vision?

Unfortunately, election years with gay rights ballot measures are often marked by increases in hate crimes, property crimes and overall nastiness. This election year is proving to be no exception. Just Out has seen our rack taken from the lobby of the 15th and Broadway building and thrown into a nearby trash bin, papers and all. An outdoor rack in front of downtown Nordstrom disappeared, even while chained to nearby racks. These are not accidents. In Beaverton, a law office adjacent to a requested drop site haughtily informed our driver, "We don't think these should be placed in public." Ah, bite me.

Finally, I would be remiss to not remind you, as if you could forget, that as Nov. 2 and the presidential election approach, so do related deadlines and guidelines. Oct. 12 is the final date that you can register to vote in Oregon. Oregon ballots will be mailed to voters Oct. 19. Ballots are due back in by Nov. 2. Prior to voting, it is your obligation to become informed and educated. Registering is only the first step; your greatest responsibility of all is to know who and what to vote for. Just Out will provide our election endorsements in the Oct. 15 issue, but I encourage you, I implore you, to study all candidates and ballot measures. And if you should find yourself in the downtown Portland area on one of these beautiful fall days, take your voters' pamphlet and visit the garden honoring Keeston Lowery adjacent to the main entrance of City Hall. This would be an excellent place to visit, study, reflect and honor your right to vote. j

REFLECTIONS

5 years ago in just out... VOL. 16 No. 23, OCT. 1, 1999

• It's been two weeks since the Oregon Liquor Control Commission suspended The Embers' liquor license. The OLCC, whose mission is to regulate the sale, distribution and "responsible use of alcoholic beverages in order to protect Oregon's public health, safety and community livability," did so Sept. 14 citing "repeated serious and persistent problems of fights, assaults, large unruly crowds and intoxicated customers."

• A group of parents, teachers and students from the Seattle area has organized what is believed to be the country's first gay and lesbian parent-teacher association.

• Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber has proclaimed October Lesbian and Gay History Month. The proclamation acknowledges the contributions gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans people have made to society throughout Oregon history and offers the opportunity for positively affirming the lives, families and culture of sexual minorities.

• The Rev. Susan Leo says she "gave in to God and to popular demand." In July, the Portland resident and longtime human rights advocate was ordained in the United Church of Christ, one of the few Protestant churches to ordain gay men and lesbians. At the urging of friends and supporters, Leo founded Bridgeport Community Church a year or so ago. What began as a monthly service has since grown into a full-time church with a weekly service.



• According to a Sept. 24 *San Francisco Chronicle* article, the San Francisco city attorney's office says the Mormon Church may have violated its tax-exempt status when it encouraged its California members to help finance an initiative designed to prohibit same-sex marriages.

• Jonathan Schmitz has been sentenced to 25 to 50 years in prison for killing a gay man who revealed he had a crush on Schmitz during a taping of *The Jenny Jones Show*.

• The London street-activist group OutRage is calling on Britain's biggest gay club, G.A.Y., to cancel a performance by Donna Summer unless she recants statements allegedly made during her 1983 concert tour to the effect that AIDS is God's retribution against gays for their sinful lifestyles.

• Four teams from the Rose City Softball Association played in the annual Pacific Cup tournament held during Labor Day weekend in Vancouver, British Columbia. The participating teams were Scandals, Red Wings, Bogart's Quest and JOQ's—with the Red Wings shagging second place in the "C Recreational" division.

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