

Kerry'd Away

Paige Richardson and her wife, Michele Wren, get ready to watch the first presidential debate with other Kerry supporters Sept. 30 at Billy Reed's



Lesbian leads Democratic presidential candidate's Oregon campaign

by Stephen Blair

It has been a big year for Paige Richardson. On May 16 she married Michele Wren, her partner of more than six years. The next day she took on the job of a lifetime.

Richardson, a Democrat, has worked on political campaigns since 1988. So when she received a call from Mary Beth Cahill, national campaign director for John Kerry, she says she "suspected that [Cahill] was not calling for shopping tips."

In fact, Cahill called to offer her the position of Oregon state director for the Kerry campaign.

"I asked Michele first because I expected she might say no," Richardson recalls. "But she said: 'Not only do I think it's OK, but I think you have to. This election is too important.'"

It turned out that the job had its perks right from the beginning. Kerry made a stop in Oregon on May 17 and 18, and he was aware of Richardson's recent nuptials.

"Nice to meet you. I understand congratulations are in order," she remembers him saying.

Then he gave her a big hug. "That meant a lot," Richardson says.

The 41-year-old has lived in Portland since 1991. She grew up in Charleston, W.Va., the daughter of liberal parents who raised her to believe in "equality and fairness and all the basic Democratic principles."

Richardson's own political activism took flight when she was just 5 years old. When a friend of the family ran for governor, she took part in a kiddy car parade, pedaling around in a metal car to show her support.

When her father ran for office a few years later, Richardson adopted a guerrilla approach to campaigning. "I would grab my friends and my red wagon and fill it up with stuff from the headquarters," she says.

As a teen-ager Richardson decided she didn't want to follow in her parents' footsteps, so she tried to focus on non-political pursuits. This was far easier said than done.

"Politics was my framework for everything," she explains. "Every time there was something that wasn't working or there was an injustice, this was the way I knew to fix it."

As a student at University of Denver, Richardson felt compelled to run for student government because it refused to recognize the

queer student organization. But her decisive plunge into political activism came in 1988. She was fed up with the Reagan administration and eager to see a Democrat take the White House.

Michael Dukakis' loss in the 1988 election did not quell her enthusiasm. She has worked on numerous campaigns during the past 16 years and helped secure Al Gore's narrow victory in New Mexico four years ago.

For all of her boisterous enthusiasm, Richardson is not the type to get in your face with her political ideologies.

"Typically when I meet people, I don't tell them what I do," she says. "People make assumptions. Now, unfortunately, in politics we've gotten into the habit of driving wedges as opposed to bringing people together."

Could Richardson take off her campaign manager's cap and become, say, an accountant? Not likely.

"I couldn't get excited about doing anything else for a living," she explains. "There are unfortunately always more wrongs to right."

When she's not working umpteen-hour shifts at the Kerry campaign office, Richardson enjoys the outdoors with her wife and two dogs. (They have two cats at home, too.) The couple met in a martial arts program, and both continue to train. They'd like to travel more, but Richardson's 'round-the-clock schedule puts a damper on their wanderlust.

Why should queers vote for Kerry?

For Richardson it's a no-brainer that Kerry is the best choice for the queer population. She concedes that his and running mate John Edwards' "one man, one woman" stance on marriage has been frustrating for queers but insists that "they are aligned with us on every other issue."

"I know there's controversy and some frustration in our community about his position on marriage," she says. "Kerry and Edwards may not be saying the 'marriage' word, but... we shouldn't judge them on just that one thing because they are fully for equality. Both of them believe civil unions would be a great thing. Kerry and Edwards are probably two of the most tolerant individuals we could ever hope to find."

And then there's President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney.

"The Bush folks don't accept us," Richardson says. "They don't want to help us, and they're totally beholden to Christian fundamentalists. Bush and Cheney can't even say 'transgender.' They don't even know what that is."

Richardson's philosophy boils down to one peppy little campaign battle cry: "If you're homos, vote for Kerry!"

STEPHEN BLAIR is a Portland free-lance writer.

Unfortunately, in politics we've gotten into the habit of driving wedges as opposed to bringing people together.
-Paige Richardson



eduardo mulero dds pc
general and esthetic dentistry



The Zoom! In-Office Whitening System will make your teeth dramatically whiter in a little over an hour.

Take your first step to feeling good, looking great and making a memorable impression every time you smile!

Offer good after exam and x-rays for new patients. Offer expires December 31st, 2004.

(503) 203-6978 - www.mulero.com - 1585 SW Marlow Ave, #204

Get your teeth whitened fast with the scientifically advanced Zoom! Feel good and look great with a whiter smile!

\$100 OFF
ZOOM!
In Office Teeth Whitening

Not your parents mortgage company



The world is a different place than when your parents bought a home. The 30-year fixed loan they got might not be the best loan for you today.

We offer the latest in interest only, deferred interest and \$0 down loan programs. We will help you find the one that will benefit your whole financial picture.

Let us show you how choosing one of these programs can save you thousands of dollars in interest.

Rose City
Mortgage Specialists

www.RoseCityMtg.com 503.768.4248