

NORTHWEST newsbriefs

NEW GROUP FORMS TO ADVANCE MARRIAGE QUALITY

Portland Community College Cascade Campus' queer group, United Sexualities, held a meeting Nov. 20 to discuss the continuing struggle for marriage equality in Oregon.

A coalition of individuals and organizations was launched to pursue actions in favor of marriage equality. As its first project, the newly formed "Equality Coalition" will partner with a group at Oregon State University on their "Yes on Section 20" campaign.

The coalition's next meeting will be held 4 p.m. Dec. 4 in Room 104 of Jackson Hall at 705 N. Killingsworth St. For more information contact Chelsia Rice at 503-756-1456 or chelsiarice@hotmail.com.

OREGON SENATORS SECURE MONEY FOR AIDS ORGANIZATIONS

U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and Gordon Smith, R-Ore., announced Nov. 21 that Oregon will receive several hundred million dollars in federal funding for key projects throughout the state.



U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., scored pork for three AIDS organizations in Portland

Wyden and Smith secured this funding in the fiscal year 2005 omnibus spending bill, which has passed the Senate and the House of Representatives and expected to move shortly to the White House for signature into law. The measure will fund numerous Oregon agriculture, energy, water, natural resources, transportation,

infrastructure, community development, health education and job training programs.

Three AIDS organizations in Portland will receive funding. Cascade AIDS Project will receive \$50,000. Esther's Pantry will receive \$30,000 to provide food and supplies to people living with AIDS. Our House of Portland will receive \$30,000 for Medicare and Medicaid services.

CAP executive director Thomas Bruner says the money for his organization will help fund its Working Choices program, which helps men and women with HIV/AIDS re-enter the work force.

"CAP first identified the need for back-to-work services in its 1999 Strategic Plan as a response to people with HIV/AIDS living longer and healthier lives, and created Working Choices three years ago," says Bruner. "Over 50 percent of program participants are now either back at work, enrolled in work training programs or back in school completing degrees."

LAMBDA LEGAL PUTS ITS FOOT DOWN IN WASHINGTON

Same-sex couples must be allowed to marry, according to a brief filed Nov. 24 by Lambda Legal and the Northwest Women's Law Center at the Washington Supreme Court.

"Our clients pay all the same taxes as their neighbors and co-workers, and they deserve all the same legal protections," said Jennifer C. Pizer, senior counsel in Lambda Legal's Western Regional Office.

The brief asks the state's high court to uphold a ruling earlier this year that said the state's prohibition on same-sex couples marrying is a violation of the Washington Constitution.

The lawsuit was filed in March on behalf of same-sex couples who were denied marriage licenses in King County, arguing that the state constitution had been violated. In a historic ruling Aug. 4, King County Superior Court Judge William Downing said that the state constitution guarantees basic rights to gay and lesbian people and that those rights are violated by a state law prohibiting same-sex couples from marrying. Downing's and a similar decision in Thurston County were expedited to the state Supreme Court, which will hear arguments March 8, 2005.

"The characteristics embodied by these plaintiffs are ones that our society and the institution of marriage need more of, not less," Downing said. "Let the plaintiffs stand as inspirations for all those citizens, homosexual and heterosexual, who may follow their path." □

Compiled by MEG DALY and SARAH DOUGHER



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