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**NORTHWEST newsbriefs**

**SALEM YOUTH BENEFIT FROM BRO'S ROAD TOUR**

The staff of Basic Rights Oregon went on the road Dec. 7 to 12 on a 13-city tour of the state. Their purpose? To get together with community groups, debrief about Measure 36 and strategize for the upcoming legislative session, when they plan to help pass a comprehensive nondiscrimination bill for sexual minorities.

At one stop along the way—Willamette University in Salem—BRO organizers facilitat-

**BRIDGETOWN REAL ESTATE CELEBRATES 25 YEARS IN BUSINESS**

A quarter-century ago, Portlanders didn't have a lot of "alternative" or "gay friendly" ways to go about buying a house. Now, with the legion of options, one business is pausing to celebrate 25 years in the business. Founder Deborah Betron credits the success of Bridgetown Real Estate to its reputation for quality real estate, as well as an ethical position that takes seriously the responsibility to the client's best interests.

Because Bridgetown was known in the 1980s as the "gay real estate company," some clients would not even post its signs. When the anti-gay ballot measures came around, Betron knew it was important to remain visible and to support clients who knew they were giving their money to supportive service providers.

Bridgetown is no longer a primarily gay company; out of the 42 agents, about 70 percent are straight. The culture of the business, however, is open and accepting. "Real estate agents have to learn a lot about fair housing now, and so the anti-discrimination stuff gets covered in their education," Betron notes. The culture of Bridgetown is also decidedly open.

Betron is proudest of the loyalty of her agents, particularly Scott Bottaro, with her since 1983; John Terrill, with her since 1987; and Gerry Federico, with her since 1990. In a highly competitive business with many other options, these agents have been the lifeblood of the company as it has grown.

In honor of its 25th anniversary, Bridgetown is continuing its tradition of philanthropy by making gifts to Habitat for Humanity, Our House and Clackamas Women's Services.

Not many businesses, much less those in the cutthroat field of real estate, stick around for as long as Bridgetown. Yet, they have remained community-based and cultivated a strong local presence since Day One. (They were one of *Just Out's* first advertisers in 1983!)

**OUR HOUSE RECEIVES \$100,000 MATCHING GRANT**

An anonymous Portland foundation is providing a \$100,000 matching grant to Our House, which provides a comprehensive network of health and housing services for people with HIV/AIDS.

The grant is designed to help Our House increase participation in its major donor program known as the Circle of Friends, a designation for those who contribute \$1,000 or more annually.

The foundation will match, dollar for dollar, gifts made by newcomers to the Circle of Friends. For a donation to qualify, it must be received by Dec. 31.

With this grant—the first of its kind ever



John Roop (top left) meets with other Salem high school students as part of the Basic Rights Oregon bus tour

ed a meeting between a dozen high school students and several college students to talk about youth activism.

Many of the high schoolers are active in their schools' Gay Straight Alliances. John Roop, a 17-year-old at Sprague High School in Salem, has been involved in his GSA for two years.

"[The GSA] makes it safe to be who you are," he says.

While Roop said his GSA is mostly a social group, he hopes it can become more political. He sees a need for raising awareness about harassment of queer students.

"I got called 'fag' today for the first time in four years," he told *Just Out*. He says he was so caught off guard by the slur that he did not respond. If he chose to, he could file a complaint with his school under its sexual harassment prevention policy.

For the most part, however, Roop says he has "gotten a lot of support" at school.

Melanie Altaras, 16, is not sure yet if her school, West Salem High, is supportive of her GSA. She founded it only two months ago and says the principal's office keeps losing the group's paperwork. Still, five to 10 students meet once a week. They, too, are concerned about anti-gay slang.

She says she wants to educate fellow students that to deride something by saying "that's gay" is, to her mind, "hate, discrimination and name-calling."

BRO board co-chairwoman Alisa Simmons says the communities visited on the tour were not feeling defeated after the passage of Measure 36. Instead, like the student groups, they want to get to work.

"People are over [Measure 36]," she says. "They are tired of being on the defensive."

Simmons says the communities BRO has visited are eager to do proactive work around human rights, including basic education about what a statewide nondiscrimination bill for queers would mean.

BRO communications director Rebekah Kassell says more than 80 percent of Oregonians support the concept of a such a bill.



25 years strong!