

NORTHWESTnews

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

Q-LAND lands \$12,500 contract for bar testing, celebrates first anniversary by Sarah Dougher



Q-LAND director Bart Church (center) with the Eagle's Karl Wilgus (left) and Mr. Oregon State Leather Andy Mangels

Queer Love Action Network for Discovery (Q-LAND), a queer men's wellness and HIV/STD prevention organization serving the Portland metro area, marks its first anniversary this month. To celebrate, the nonprofit will continue to expand its successful HIV/STD bar testing program to the youth and leather communities. A major goal of the organization is to get men who have more than one sex partner to get tested every three months as a matter of course.

As part of a larger amount from the state that was divided among a number of HIV/STD wellness and prevention organizations, Multnomah County recently granted Q-LAND a \$12,500 contract to provide bar testing events from January through June. The project is a collaboration with the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center, Multnomah County Health Department and Outside In, as well as many local entertainers, venues and publications (including this one).

Also in February, Q-LAND's advocacy project, Men's Prevention Advocacy Campaign and Team (M-PACT), has set the goal to interview 1,000 queer men in the Portland metro area. The survey will ask about perceptions of HIV/STD prevention in the queer male community and will log suggestions about how to get queer men more involved in leading these efforts. Former No on Constitutional Amendment 36 canvassers will conduct the survey in gay bars and other queer men's social venues. It will also be available online.

GETTING TESTED

You may wonder what happens when you get tested in a bar. Each person who is tested receives between 10 and 30 minutes of counseling, and about 15 guys are tested each night the team goes out. (Many more wait in line.) You are tested by someone from the Multnomah or Washington County Health Departments or Outside In. About one week later, you call to get your results and for more counseling. When you get tested, you have to be sober enough to give informed consent, and you are screened by two people for sobriety before getting tested.

Q-LAND's mission is to address HIV, syphilis, gonorrhea, barebacking and crystal meth/party drugs among gay and bi men. The goal of these programs is to work with the root causes of these problems, which Q-LAND sees

as homophobia, depression, sex addiction, drug/alcohol addiction and anxiety. In addition to bar testing, Q-LAND provides queer men with alternative support systems that address their needs for fun, intimacy and wellness. Programs include bar and online outreach, a "men touching with heart" workshop, a men's therapeutic yoga class, a men's film salon as well as wellness information and referrals.

"We are creating a community of leaders that empower queer men to be well, have fun and fully contribute their many gifts," says Q-LAND's director, Bart Church. By focusing leadership on queer men, Q-LAND hopes to nurture a grassroots organization that reflects the values of wellness in the community itself.

Church perceives a gap in HIV/STD services for men having sex with men in Multnomah County, in part citing the turnover of three different prevention coordinators at Cascade AIDS Project in the past year. He blames a lack of consistency in HIV prevention services targeted toward queer men. Nevertheless, this assertion is contradicted by CAP's annual report, which notes that 65 percent of its clients are gay and bi men, as are 63 percent of its prevention education clients. In addition, CAP has recently restructured its gay and bi men's wellness and prevention department to increase and strengthen the resources that it offers this community.

There are, unfortunately, more than enough queer male clients to go around for each of these programs, and the many others that find their place in the Portland metro area. 

Q-LAND will throw a Juliet & Romeo Party on Feb. 19 at Escape and a Uniforms & Buzzcuts Party on Feb. 26 at the Eagle. For more information call 503-223-8822, e-mail info@qland.org or visit www.qland.org. The OREGON AIDS HOTLINE is 503-223-AIDS.

Scary statistics

72 percent: The number of newly reported cases of HIV from men who have sex with men in Multnomah County. There are between 170 and 180 new cases each year. These men constitute 97 percent of syphilis cases, 57 percent of male gonorrhea cases and 27 percent of publicly funded HIV tests.

It is not just the younger set: 30 percent of the syphilis cases in Multnomah County were in men between 30 and 50 years old.



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