



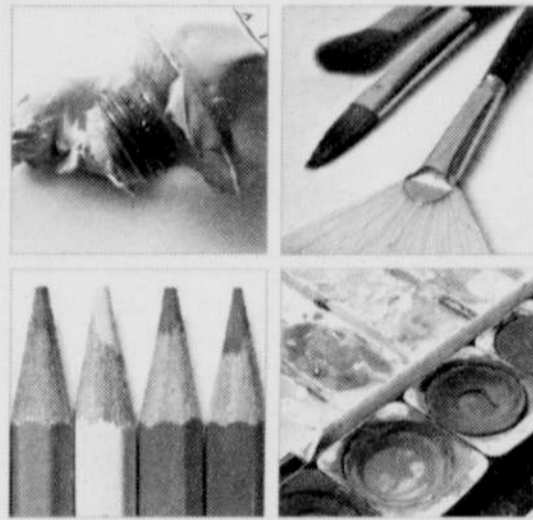
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NORTHWEST newsbriefs

SYPHILIS NUMBERS UP IN MULTNOMAH COUNTY

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently issued notices that link the rise in syphilis cases among queer men to the steep rise in multiple anonymous partners and barebacking. Their message seeks to clarify prevailing public opinion that this rise is because of cyclical fluctuations in disease immunity.

The risk of getting syphilis rises exponentially with the number of sex partners a person has, whether oral, anal or genital.

According to the Multnomah County Health Department, 97 percent of 2004 syphilis cases in the Portland area were among men who have sex with men. Syphilis cases have been doubling annually for four years among this group.

Bart Church, who runs the Queer Love Action Network for Discovery, suggests that in order to avoid syphilis, sexually active men should get tested every three months, have sex with fewer people, avoid sex while intoxicated and use condoms.

Q-LAND offers free bar testing at C.C. Slaughters on the first Thursday of each month, Scandals on the second Friday and the Eagle on the fourth Saturday. You can also check out resources online at www.qland.org.

EQUALITY COALITION CELEBRATES VALENTINE'S DAY AT CITY HALL

The Equality Coalition, a group working for full marriage equality, sponsored a Valentine's Day celebration at Portland City Hall with wedding cake and music.

"In spite of the passage of the discriminatory constitutional amendment in November, we need to remember that many Oregonians support marriage equality and want to see that all families are treated fairly," said organizer Chelsia Rice, chairwoman of the student advisory board at the Women's Resource on Portland Community College's Cascade Campus. "The fact that thousands of same-sex couples stood in line in the rain to get a marriage license last March shows that their agenda is a modest one: legal recognition of their marriages and the same rights and responsibilities that heterosexual married couples have."

GAY AND LESBIAN TOURISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE CONVENES

A broad coalition of community leaders met Jan. 26 to discuss a new Portland Oregon Visitors Association initiative to attract sexual minority tourists to the area. Representatives from the city, hotels, galleries, newspapers (including this one) and cultural institutions were in attendance.

Barbara Steinfeld called the meeting to coordinate a group that is interested in marketing to the queer consumer/audience and that could advise POVA in its efforts.

After a brief outline of past marketing activities and current efforts—which include mention in the *Alaska Airlines Northwest Travel Planner* and *Columbia Fun Map* as well as presence at

a Travel Alternatives Group show next month in Seattle—the group discussed potential marketing messages for Portland. For more information about this advisory committee, e-mail barbara@pova.com.

HELP WITH THE HUMAN TOUCH

Many living with HIV/AIDS have experienced the "take a number" treatment when seeking assistance with health and housing.

One group, HIV Day Center, strives to create a community atmosphere while addressing the often overlooked needs of those living with the disease, including a compassionate ear.

"This has more of a psycho-social support bent," says Mara Steen, program associate at the center. "Basically we're a community where people can come to and feel that they are cared about and supported."

The center, under the parent program Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, provides a plethora of unconventional services that are particularly helpful to people struggling with stable housing and a limited income. It serves hot meals, both in-house and delivery; has shower and laundry facilities, computer services and a clothes closet; and arranges for haircuts and massages. A social worker is on duty to help with case management and referrals to support services. There are many opportunities, both formal and informal, to receive counseling.

"The majority of folks who have consistently walked through that door are in need of support from other people who can listen to them.



BRO's newest staff member, development director Brenda Kinoshita

We are here to say, 'I can meet you where you are, and I can support you in that process,'" says Steen.

The HIV Day Center is seeking volunteers to support the services it provides. Specifically, drivers are needed for food delivery and food and clothes pickup. A kitchen assistant and English tutor are also needed. The center welcomes anyone with a creative skill or passion to share with the group.

For more information call 503-460-3822, visit www.emoregon.org or e-mail hivcenter@emoregon.org.

—Jaymee R. Cuti

A WORTHY CAUSE

Basic Rights Oregon, Oregon's largest non-profit organization advocating for queer rights, knows how to do a lot with a little.

According to Brenda Kinoshita, the agency's newest staff member, BRO gives the illusion of being a large organization because of its visibility.

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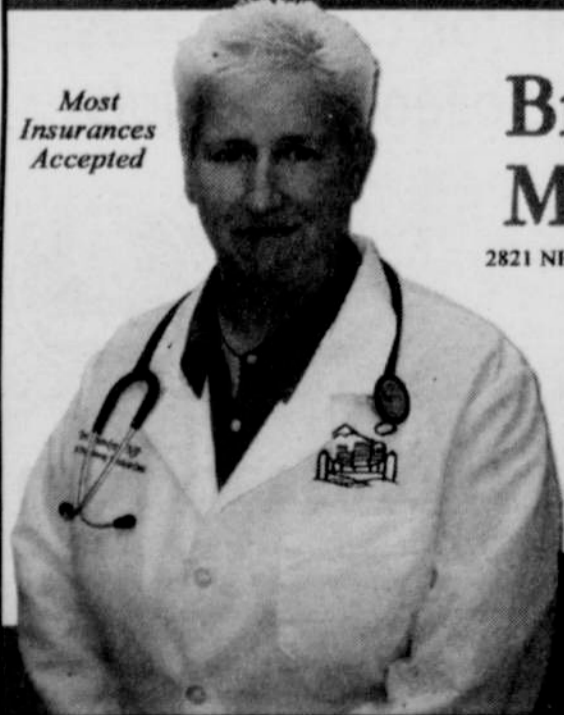
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