

SOUTHERN OREGON REPORT

LGBT Political Caucus calls it quits; Lambda Awards celebrate local contributions

by Sarah Dougher

Although the queer community center in Portland is still in the planning stages, in Ashland the Abdill-Ellis Lambda Community Center is going strong after a momentary stumble. Named for Roxanne Ellis and Michelle Abdill, who were violently murdered in Medford in 1995 because of their sexual orientation, the agency has hit some rough patches in the past.

But a renewed vigor has taken hold, as evidenced by the publication *The Center Post*. Bringing news from the sexual minorities community living in and visiting southern Oregon and northern California, the information from these pages evidences a community whose far-flung members nevertheless feel solidarity.

A few pieces of important news:

- The LGBT Political Caucus of Southern Oregon, which had a vigorous run between 1996 and 2005, was formally dissolved Feb. 8. In a statement, the board members wrote: "This very difficult vote was taken after heartfelt deliberation and thoughtful consideration for the current feasibility of continuing. Though the loss of the caucus is disappointing, we hope it also opens up the positive opportunity and catalyst for a future local LGBT political organization to arise anew with fresh people, ideas and support."

About 250 people gathered Feb. 19 for the ninth annual Lambda Awards, which honors people who have made outstanding contributions to the sexual minorities community in southern Oregon.

Kristy Alberty received the Humanitarian Award for her work as outreach coordinator on the No on Constitutional Amendment 36 campaign. Jeffrey Faust received the Community Outreach Award for his work on the Kerry-Edwards and No on 36 campaigns, calling U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., out on the subject during a town hall meeting.

Danielle Mancuso's tireless efforts to keep the community center alive financially were rewarded with the Community Service Award. In addition to this work, she also put in many long hours for No on 36 and helped organize Pride Week.

Artattack Theater won the Arts and Entertainment Award. Founded in 2000 by Justin Lockwood and Nicole Isaacson-Hill, the ensemble of seven delivers innovative and compelling performances that push their audiences to see the sexual minorities community in a different light.

The Mail Tribune of Ashland received the Hall of Fame Award for its unflagging ability to encourage discussion and actions about the barriers that exist in the sexual minorities community. It also printed an editorial in strong opposition to Measure 36 and promoting positive relationships within the sexual minorities community and the larger community of the Rogue Valley.

Two new awards were presented this year, the Outstanding Youth Award and the Connect the Dots Perseverance Through Oppression Award. The youth award went to the Gay Straight Alliance of South Medford High for its courage and efforts in creating and establishing an organization with more than 15 members.

Connect the Dots is a Grants Pass theater that is producing a documentary about its experience on *The Laramie Project*. In the documentary and through the course of the evening, it discussed the similarities of Grants Pass and Laramie, Wyo. Connect the Dots was a new theater when it put on *The Laramie Project*, and it received disapproval in

the form of hate mail, angry phone messages and even the loss of a grant. Never did it consider not following through with the production. It even found a part for all the people who came to try out. In the eyes of the awarding committee, the play was an important work to bring to the valley, and Connect the Dots received an award named after the organization in honor of its perseverance through oppression. **JM**

To become involved with queer issues in southern Oregon, consider joining the ABDILL-ELLIS LAMBDA COMMUNITY CENTER. It can be reached online at www.abdellis.org.



Kristy Alberty received the Lambda Humanitarian Award for her outreach work during the No on Constitutional Amendment 36 campaign.



Danielle Mancuso was honored for her tireless contributions to queer activism in the Rogue Valley.

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