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NORTHWEST newsbriefs

SMYRC RECEIVES QUEER TOBACCO PREVENTION GRANT

A few months ago, *Just Out* announced a grant opportunity through the Oregon Department of Human Services to provide smoking education and cessation services to our community. The project objectives were to increase the capacity of Oregon's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities to develop and implement effective strategies that are designed to reduce the use by queers of tobacco and exposure to second-hand smoke and to develop such programs so that they are appropriate for the social and cultural perspectives, views and experiences of queer populations.

These goals were set out to be accomplished through the development, establishment and facilitation of a queer-specific tobacco prevention and education network; the implementation of a regional tobacco prevention project; the provision of technical assistance to community-based programs and other Tobacco Prevention and Education Program partners; and participation in a Multicultural Tobacco Prevention Council.

The Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center has been awarded the grant and will house and coordinate the Oregon LGBT Tobacco Prevention and Education Network. SMYRC was founded in 1998 because community members came together to address the unmet need for a safe place for queer kids. SMYRC originated under the auspices of Phoenix Rising Foundation and today is a freestanding program of Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare.

Preliminary data from the Oregon Department of Human Services regarding tobacco use demonstrate that smoking rates among queer adults are disproportionately higher. The state has no data specific to tobacco use among youth because the primary risk behavior data collection tool, the Oregon Healthy Teens Survey, excludes questions about sexual orientation, making it impossible to correlate the data to the queer population subset.

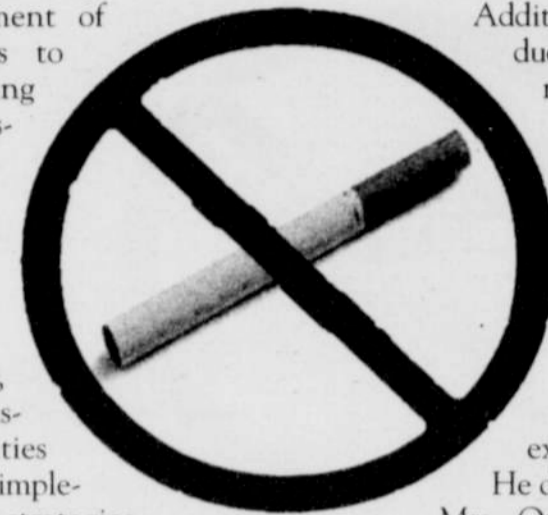
According to SMYRC staff, as well as reports of adult queer smokers and youth service providers, queer youth smoke at a disproportionately high rate. Employees estimate that 30 percent of SMYRC youth use tobacco and that 40 percent smoke socially.

The purpose of the initiative is to raise awareness of the disproportionate impact of tobacco on the sexual minorities community and to develop a response. The first six months will focus on outreach to community leaders in the tri-county area and along the Interstate 5 corridor. SMYRC will leverage its advisory board to take a leadership role in getting the network started and intends to conduct preliminary outreach and education at Portland Pride 2005. The network's role will be to conduct projects that institute best practices and monitor outcomes—affecting policy around tobacco, countering pro-tobacco media and promoting quitting.

SMYRC provides a safe, harassment- and drug-free space for more than 1,000 queer youth to gather and participate in constructive activities like art, music, community organizing, education, peer support, mental health groups, case management, counseling and job readiness preparation. Because of SMYRC's success as the

hub of effective services for queer youth, it was recently chosen by Multnomah County to provide direct services and technical assistance through the School Age Policy Framework.

Additionally, results of a recent survey conducted by the Portland LGBTQ Community Center Fund, which was responded to by 1,500 queers, indicate SMYRC is perceived as the most effective queer organization in Oregon.



MRS. OREGON GETS SNUB FROM PORTLAND MAYOR

Portland Mayor Tom Potter is walking his talk by choosing not to endorse an event that he considers exclusive and discriminatory.

He declined to write a letter supporting the Mrs. Oregon America pageant because the rules specify that contestants must be born females and married to males. These specifications are new to the pageant, written after marriage licenses were granted to same-sex couples in Multnomah County.

Pageant director Libby Crawford said opening the event to lesbians and trans people would convert the stage into a political arena. In a statement, Potter said the pageant rule "fails to recognize the other loving relationships in our community."

Potter has a history of supporting queers, dating back to 1990, when he was Portland's first police chief to march in uniform at Portland Pride. He was present for his daughter Katie's marriage to her lesbian partner in Multnomah County last year, describing it as a "proud papa" moment.




The Mrs. Oregon America pageant is June 25 at Clackamas High School.

DAY OF SILENCE/NIGHT OF NOISE SET FOR APRIL 13

The Day of Silence, a project of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network in collaboration with the United States Student Association, is a student-led day of action where those who support making anti-gay bias unacceptable in schools take a daylong vow of silence to recognize and protest the discrimination and harassment—in effect, the silencing—experienced by queer students and their allies. The Day of Silence was founded in 1996 by students at University of Virginia and in years since has become a landmark national event.

In Portland, the Day of Silence will be held April 13 followed by a Night of Noise, a tradi-



DAY of SILENCE

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