

rude way." He believes that there is a place for everyone at Pride but that families and older people are getting their needs met, while young people are left out.

Chance works hard to bring unity and peace to the sometimes tumultuous life of a nightclub booker.

"There's a perception out there that club kids are all drug addicts. But that simply isn't true. We are involved and raise money for charities."

He says older queer people who look down on kids should remember that stereotypes can be harmful, no matter which way they cut. "Just like bigots think all gays do is screw each other, the older people think the younger people are all drug addicts."

Chance is optimistic despite his opinionated take on Pride.

"A lot of us want to see changes in the com-

munity. We take an active roll because we don't see the older people doing anything."

So if Chance ran the world, what would Pride look like?

"I see it centered around Stark Street. I see it as a celebration of the achievements of our community. I would have a huge rainbow flag a block long. I would clear the Portland streets completely for Pride."

Watch for Chance as he continues to work his way up the hierarchy of the court system, and as he continues to put his good ideas to work for the betterment of the community. **J**

CLUB ESCAPE is at 333 S.W. Park Ave. It is open from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. Fridays with a \$7 cover and from 10:30 p.m. to 5 a.m. Saturdays with a \$10 cover. There are shows every other Friday and every Saturday at 12:30 a.m.

FIRST PERSON

"Coming together is what may save us all"

by Clair Shannon

"Club kid." This is not a new wave of gay youth. "Club kids" have names and jobs and live in the same world as the rest of you. We drive your buses and serve you at the restaurants where you dine. That morning latte is most likely made by the hands of Portland's queer youth. Like everyone, we deal with life's little ups and downs, but there is one thing we have to remember every day: We are not accepted like the straight youth.

Not only do we have to deal with the world and its prejudice, most of us have families that don't accept us for who they really are. So we either hide it or look elsewhere for support.

Club kids create families in the club scene that are so much like real, supportive families that they live by them. Families evolve and expand into a reality wholly different from the hate-filled one we all live in. Without the family-like networks of support between kids, that is all there would be. With the families we create, there is reassurance that we can return and that there is a different reality. That is not to say that everything is conflict-free: We have our quarrels and fights between families. Many kids don't have stable home lives or they don't have the love or confidence they need to be themselves.

Organizations and groups try to capture the essence of gay youth in Portland and help it grow, but as a gay youth I can say that I have not seen much change. Change is important because these kids are the future of the gay community, and without them things may never change.

I have a title at the only gay underage nightclub in Portland, and it is my job to make a change, make this town a better place for us to live. We only have so much pull in the community since it is hard for the older gay community to take us seriously. All we want is support. Coming together is what may save us all.

With this last election—between Measure 36 and Bush continuing his presidency—the gay community has been set back in its ongoing fight for equality. Now more than ever, we all have to look at what we are fighting for and keep in mind that if we don't help the homophobes understand why we want to be equal, they will continue to keep our rights from us.

Gay kids as well as gay adults deserve the same treatment as straight, trans, bi, black or white individuals. Gay kids have to grow up in a

world that does not accept them. Gay youth are invisible, ignored and forgotten about, but we are not going to go away. Your brother, sister, mother or best friend may be living in this kind of world.

I know that when I say this fight is not over, I can speak for the "club kids" as well as queer youth.

The queer youth hold on to what is available to them—the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center and the underage Club Escape—because that is all that there is for them.

But once a year we have Pride, the biggest celebration of all.

Pride is an amazing opportunity to be who you truly are. Without it, the gay community would crumble. Pride is a reminder that we are strong and that we are beautiful and that no matter what life throws our way, "We will survive."

Not all of Pride is so grand—people who have hate in their hearts tend to show it more vigorously in our time of joy.

Pride has so much to offer, no matter what your age or sex is.

I met my wife at Pride and met my closest friends at Pride. In the club scene, Pride is planned at least six months in advance. The gay kids from all over Oregon depend on it every year. They come from miles away to feel that safety and liberation.

Pride is an event that I did not get to see growing up in Ashland. Four years ago when I came to my first Pride in Portland, my life was changed forever. Pride is a time to show to the community what you have been working so hard on all year.

The Imperial Sovereign Rose Court as well as the lower courts have a chance to be thanked and respected. This year will be my first year in the parade and also my first year performing at Pride. This whole year the lower courts have worked to create a new and better place for queer youth.

Pride shows me to not be afraid of who I am and to embrace it. I have seen many kids go from bad to good in their lives because of Pride. To all our friends who we have loved and lost, we will carry a flag for you, heads held high. That is what Pride is for—to celebrate life, love and happiness. **J**

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