

NORTHWEST newsbriefs

McNeil paraded the club's value for diversity as shaping the policy change, yet Oregon's same-sex couples must travel out of state to obtain the necessary documents for eligibility. The only states issuing the documents required by the MAC are Massachusetts, Connecticut and Vermont.

For more information visit www.themac.com.

—JRC

HIV FORUM IN WASHINGTON STATE

A forum will tackle the issue of whether prevention and care services are meeting HIV needs in Southwest Washington. It will also discuss current trends and looming changes in Medicare, particularly for those who get their prescription drugs from Medicaid.

The Washington State Governor's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS is meeting from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. June 21. The public forum is at the Educational Services District 112, 2500 N.E. 65th Ave. in Vancouver.

The change, confusing to many, begins Jan. 1, 2006, when Medicaid patients eligible for Medicare will lose their drug coverage and obtain prescription drugs instead through the new Medicare prescription drug program. State officials will share the latest information on how that change will affect people with HIV, especially those who get drugs through the AIDS Drug Assistance Program.

The panelists include HIV care providers and consumers.

For more information call 360-236-3444.

—JRC

SEXUAL MINORITIES AFFIRMED BY LUTHERAN GROUP

Sexual minority Lutherans were given approval and acceptance last month as the Oregon Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America joined the Reconciling in Christ roster of Lutherans Concerned/North America.

At its annual meeting held from May 27 to 29 in Corvallis, Oregon became the 22nd of the 65 synods in the American Lutheran organization to openly and affirmatively welcome people of all sexual orientations.

Emily Eastwood, executive director of Lutherans Concerned/North America and the Reconciling in Christ program, called the change "good news indeed."

"As a gay person and a lifelong Lutheran, the sea of green cards approving the RIC resolution was simply overwhelming. Tears and smiles came easily for those of us who have felt excluded by our church because of who we love," she said. "The welcoming resolution passed by the Oregon Synod sends a strong message to the community and to the wider church that people of all sexual orientations and gender identities are claimed by the synod as part of the body of Christ."

The Oregon Synod voted by a large majority to affirm that the rich diversity of Christians includes sexual orientation and to extend welcome to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. It also voted to "expect and encourage people of all sexual orientations and gender identities to share in the sacramental and general life of the synod, congregations and organizations."

Approval of the Reconciling in Christ resolution followed requests that this August's Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America give its pastors discretion to perform services of blessing for same-gender couples, and calling on the Lutheran body to provide resources for clergy in their work to counsel and support such couples.

The Reconciling in Christ roster lists more than 330 Lutheran congregations, synods and organizations in the United States and Canada that publicly welcome people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

—JRC

GRANT EXPANDS CLINIC SERVICES

A Portland safety net clinic will better serve its clients thanks to a federal grant totaling \$450,000.

Outside In, which specializes in meeting the medical needs of homeless youth, can now expand services in Portland. It turns away 10 to 15 people daily who don't have health insurance or the means to pay for medical care.

"Outside In is committed to helping homeless youth attain healthy, productive lives and ultimately self-sufficiency. Medical care is an important step in helping them achieve that goal," said Kathy Oliver, executive director of Outside In.

Oliver notes that in a state where health care services have been cut dramatically, landing such a significant grant is of tremendous benefit to the community.

The grant will expand Outside In's medical capacity by approximately 50 percent, allowing for 7,000 additional annual clinic visits. It will also fund a medical van to serve people for whom the clinic is not easily accessible. The vehicle will be fully equipped with two exam rooms, a lab area and a pharmacy and will be linked to the agency's electronic medical record system.

"We can actually take medical care to people rather than them having to come into the agency, which is not easily accessible for some people," Oliver said.

For more information visit www.outsidein.org.

—JRC

DEMOCRATIC PARTY ANNOUNCES FORMATION OF GLBT CAUCUS

The Democratic Party of Oregon announced June 8 the formation of a new Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Caucus. The State Central Committee, composed of elected officials and party members, approved the formation of the GLBT Caucus at its quarterly meeting in Pendleton.

The caucus will have its coming-out party on the weekend of June 18 by participating in Portland Pride and conducting its first organizational meeting to elect officers.

The fight over equality for gays and lesbians has reached a historic moment in Oregon with this month's debate concerning Senate Bill 1073—which would allow civil unions for same-sex couples—leading to a likely Senate floor vote.

The Democratic Party of Oregon reports that it is committed to continuing support for the queer community's quest for equality under the law. Given the Bush administration's assault on civil liberties, as well as the public positions of Oregon Republican Party chairman and 2006 gubernatorial candidate Kevin Mannix, the Democrats believe the rights of the sexual minorities community must be defended vigilantly and will continue to lead on advancing pro-equality legislation.

The Democrats are committed to advancing a public agenda that includes nondiscrimination in employment, housing and other public accommodations. In addition, the party favors allowing committed couples to be afforded all the same rights, responsibilities and legal protections afforded to married couples, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

According to a statement, the GLBT Caucus will:

- Participate in policy decisions and outreach programs to maximize support of the Democratic Party and its endorsed candidates.
- Recruit and support queer candidates for elective office.
- Recruit and support queer candidates for party leadership positions at the state and local levels.
- Recruit and support queer candidates for the

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