

Jane of Many Trades

by Jaymee R. Cuti

You may not know her by name, but if you've attended a queer or feminist show or event in Portland in the past year, odds are Marie Fleischmann was the master of ceremonies. This activist, performer and promoter, a native of New Orleans, shifted focus from her growing production and mediation company to ensure the basic needs of her family are being met after enduring great loss from Hurricane Katrina. Her entire family has been financially devastated and displaced by the disaster.

"The people from there have suffered and are still suffering immensely. This incident is one-third natural disaster and two-thirds man-made disaster," said Fleischmann, who strongly believes underfunded levee maintenance and Federal Emergency Management Agency aid are responsible for unnecessary suffering. "There should never be monies available to go to war but not to protect human lives."

Fleischmann's family is safe, initially fleeing to motels in rural Louisiana and Arkansas. Her father has temporarily relocated to Brooklyn, N.Y., where he is staying with family. Her mother and sister remain in Louisiana and are searching for a host family to spare them the expense of daily motel bills.

"My mother is trying to get financial assistance from FEMA or the Red Cross, who have been dragging their feet there. A group of refugees waited in line all day for FEMA to arrive at a scheduled meeting point, and FEMA didn't show up," said a frustrated Fleischmann, who has been in frequent contact with her mother.



She has drawn on her community for help with the mounting motel bills and other needs and says she hopes every family has an advocate from outside the state to see them through this time of crisis.

Fleischmann is asking for donations, which she turns into gift cards for gas, food and supplies, to send to her family. Additionally, a family friend is collecting donations to cover the costs of the motel.

Portland's queer community has largely answered Fleischmann's call. Performance groups, activists and friends from DK PDX, TechnoDyke.com, Pussy Pucker Pots, In Her Tube and the Portland State University Women's Studies Department listserv have donated furniture, clothing, airline vouchers, gift cards and cash. Help has come from queer community members as far away as Austin, Texas, and Washington, D.C.

Fleischmann's brother and his girlfriend have moved to a Portland apartment donated by her landlord. Her brother is searching for paralegal work.

Fleischmann has contributed greatly to the queer and feminist community through her company, See Jane Run, which has thrown events for In Other Words, the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center, Planned Parenthood,

OUTstanding JUST asking

the National Abortion Rights Action League, DK PDX, Fat Girl Speaks, Pride Northwest and Curve magazine. Future projects include work with the PSU Women's Studies Department, where Fleischmann is pursuing a degree in arts and letters and women's studies. She recently received a \$1,000 Pride Northwest scholarship for leadership to continue her studies.

According to Fleischmann, the overlap between event planning and mediation is heavier than one might expect.

"It's a great hole to fill in the community. No one wants to show up and run the show. They want to watch it," she said.

Fleischmann said most problems with large-scale productions stem not from logistical issues but interpersonal ones. That's where See Jane Run can shine.

Fleischmann is also looking for girl rockers to play music with. She previously performed in an Austin band called Pirate Jane and produced TX 2 PDX, a music festival building bridges between Austin and Portland.

Her former bandmate has planned a benefit for Fleischmann's family 7 p.m. Sept. 19 at Mississippi Pizza Pub, 3552 N. Mississippi Ave.

Despite the tragedy that has struck her family and thousands of others along the Gulf Coast, Fleischmann takes comfort that her immediate family is safe.

"All told, all my people are accounted for," she said. "They're financially devastated, but I feel really grateful. I wouldn't say that I'm not lucky because I sure feel lucky."

To assist in Fleischmann's relief efforts, e-mail cajungirl@hotmail.com. **J**

Do you think it is ethical for queers to only help other queers in the wake of Hurricane Katrina?



SARAH GOTTESDIENER
PICA Volunteer

"I do not think that people should specify the sexual preference of the survivors. While it is all well and good to take pains to support our community, in times of such

widespread tragedy everyone needs all the help they can get, regardless of sexual orientation. I am a queer, and the only organization I have given money to is Critical Resistance New Orleans and UNICEF. Let's be human and help other humans!"



HEDO BRECEDA
Escrow Officer/
Disc Jockey

"People are people, and we shouldn't differentiate between the struggles of some and the struggles of others."



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