

NORTHWEST newsbriefs



From left, Kathy Oliver, Outside In executive director; Zaida, mascot and logo model extraordinaire; and volunteer Avery Sills work together on the exterior of Virginia Woof.

his dog, Milo, were on hand Sept. 30 to kick off the program. Dogs of all shapes and sizes, along with their owners, were treated to human and canine hors d'oeuvres, tours of the center and a dog trick contest.

With more than 3,300 square feet, the facility provides an environment where dogs will receive exercise, attention, affection and socialization. The 30-foot moveable fence allows the staff to constantly change the play area to make the pets' experience fun and exciting. All Virginia Woof staff is certified in American Red Cross Animal First Aid.

According to Outside In, many homeless youth are unable to permanently exit street life because they lack employable "soft" and technical skills. To increase the base of long-term options, Virginia Woof's goals include on-the-job training in work that is both meaningful and provides living wages. Months were spent on establishing a comprehensive training and evaluation strategy. Training is based on nationally accepted skill standards and addresses five primary areas: general workplace skills, interpersonal skills, technical skills in animal care, basic office skills and customer service skills. Additionally, occupational and technical skill will prepare youth interested in continuing in the pet care field.

Dog day care owners, veterinarians, business leaders and Outside In staff collaborated to design a results-oriented program. As an extension of the agency's Employment Resource Center, upon completion of Virginia Woof's 90-day program, youth will be placed in paid internships with the following local business partners

who will offer youth a living wage, benefits and career potential: Oregon Steel Mills, Mount Hood Chemical, Latitudes Design, Preston Gates & Ellis, Clark/Kjos Architects, Stage Craft Industries and Tazo Tea.

For more information visit www.virginiawoof.com.

PROVIDENCE BENEFITS TO COVER DEPENDENTS OF QUEER EMPLOYEES

Effective Jan. 1, 2006, Providence Health System is implementing a systemwide policy that expands benefit eligibility to same-sex domestic partners of its employees.

A number of employees have inquired about this expanded benefits eligibility during past years and have been good advocates for their colleagues and for the organization.

The system is making this benefits change for several reasons.

State law requires this coverage for California employees, effective Jan. 1, 2006. The system wishes to address the issue as proactively and fairly as possible by providing these benefits to eligible employees.

As an Employer of Choice, Providence recognizes the importance of being competitive in attracting and retaining staff. Most major health systems in Oregon offer these benefits.

"It has been a long fight for the people who work at Providence," says Roey Thorpe, executive director of Basic Rights Oregon. "The hospital system was being outpaced by other health care providers when there was a high demand for skilled employees—Kaiser had already offered domestic partnership benefits and added gender identity in early 2004. There were people, nurses and other employees who got married when they took this on. There were people who considered leaving their jobs over this issue. They've been working on this for years."

Mary Larson, a nurse who has worked at Providence for 10 years, is enthusiastic about the progress the system has made. She is part of

"There were people who considered leaving their jobs over this issue. They've been working on this for years."

—Roey Thorpe

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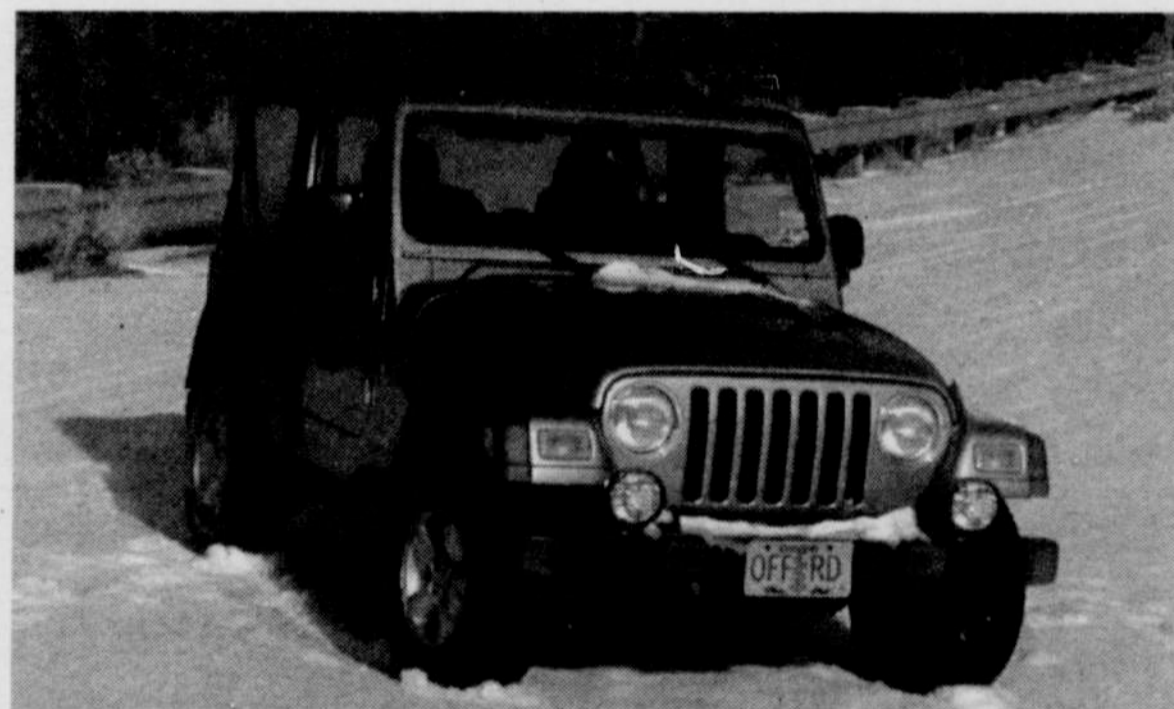
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