

Statewide Grassroots Activism Spurred on by BRO

With the assistance of Basic Rights Oregon, activists and people interested in achieving civil rights for all citizens have been meeting and planning throughout the state.

In the state capital, activists with the Salem Basic Rights Action Team are busy planning for a community forum featuring BRO executive director Roey Thorpe in early December. Plans are also under way to form a Basic Rights Action Team in Lincoln County to create

change on the local level and organize to elect fair-minded local and legislative leaders who will work for queer equality. The Washington County Basic Rights Action Team is also busy planning a "Roey on the Road" community forum. In addition, the team is working to build a stronger base of support in the Hillsboro area.

Other events throughout December include:

- **Dec. 5:** BRO's State of the State Eugene/Springfield Community Forum.
- **Dec. 10:** Roey on the Road community forum in Salem.
- **Dec. 10:** An evening reception featuring Thorpe hosted by Jennifer French in Florence.
- **Dec. 11:** Roey on the Road community forum in Florence.
- **Dec. 12:** Roey on the Road community forum in Washington County.
- **Dec. 12:** An evening reception with San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom in Portland.

For more information about these upcoming events, check the Basic Rights Oregon Web site, www.basicrights.org.

Queers Smoke Nearly Twice as Much as General Population

Breathe Free, the Oregon LGBTQ Coalition Against Tobacco, announced Nov. 23 the results of a new study showing that more than 38.5 percent of the state's lesbians, gays and bisexuals smoke. This figure is nearly double the current state average smoking rate of 19.9 percent, as reported by the Oregon Department of Human Services.

"Across the country and certainly here in Oregon, smoking rates for LGB communities are consistently higher than smoking rates of the general population," said state epidemiologist Dr. Mel Kohn. "Oregon began tracking LGB smoking rates in 2003 to begin the important work of reversing this trend."

The new data show that adult lesbians smoke at a rate of 34.3 percent, compared to 17.9 percent of women within the general population.

Among adult gay men, it was found that 44.4 percent smoke. This figure is more than twice the smoking rate of all Oregon men, who smoke

at a rate of 21.4 percent.

Not enough respondents identified as transgender to provide adequate statistics about their tobacco use. Additionally, statistics on queer youth tobacco use are not available because the Oregon Healthy Teen Survey, which measures youth risk behaviors among eighth- and 11th-graders, does not ask about the respondent's sexual orientation.

"These high smoking rates translate into increased risk for smoking-related illnesses like cancer, emphysema and heart disease," said R.E.

"Tobacco kills more people from the LGBTQ communities than hate crimes, alcohol, accidents, suicide and HIV/AIDS combined."

—R.E. Szego

Szego, queer tobacco prevention coordinator with Breathe Free. "In fact, tobacco kills more people from the LGBTQ communities than hate crimes, alcohol, accidents, suicide and HIV/AIDS combined. The risks of smoking affect not just smokers, but our friends, family and community members."

Szego added that Oregon has not collected enough data on transgender people to know exactly how high the smoking rate is within this population. It can be inferred that transgender people also smoke at exceptionally high rates because of the high stress that they face because of discrimination and violence, limited (if any) health care access and high rates of other substance abuse.

"One of the reasons the LGB rates are so high is because the tobacco industry uses its marketing muscle to openly target LGB communities," said Szego. "The smoking rates reflect the effectiveness of the industry's marketing campaigns. Tobacco marketing exploits the effects of living in a society where we face discrimination due to homophobia and transphobia, such as a sense of alienation and daily life stresses.

"Oregon's consistently high smoking rates for LGB communities demonstrate how critical outreach is in countering the industry's efforts," said Szego.

Genders Blend

A group of trans and intergender people tackled the tough topic "Being Differently Gendered in a

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A Genderblenz participant socializes at TIRC.

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