

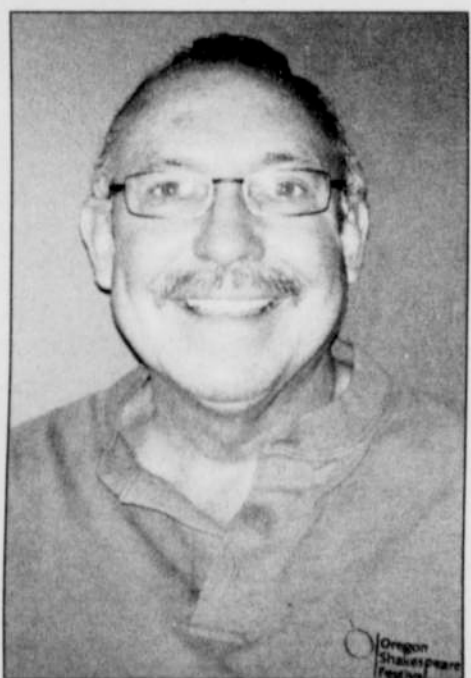
"When adults open up and ask questions, especially about trans issues, it makes me feel great because people are learning."

—Niks DePue



MARTY DAVIS

Niks DePue trains people to become queer allies.



MALKA GEFEN

GLSEN Oregon co-chairman Larry Smith believes in queer youth.

Continued from Page 22

meetings. "We do talk about stereotyping, respect and support," Wolter said students also gain more self-confidence through GSAs. "I've seen kids really blossom from their freshman to senior year."

In 2002, Wolter met Gloria Holland-Smith at a PFLAG meeting, and the two decided to get more training through Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition. "We've given 12 presentations in middle schools, high schools and universities to educate people about GLBTQ issues," said Wolter. To date, they've presented at schools in Salem, Independence and McMinnville as well as at Willamette University and Western Oregon University.

For more information on Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition and the fifth annual Oregon Safe Schools Training, Nov. 3 to 4 in Eugene, visit www.oregonsafeschools.org.

Family Pride published a pamphlet Aug. 22 titled *Building Family Equality in Every Classroom*, which gives strategies to educate school communities about the unique needs of children of sexual minority parents. To obtain a copy, call 202-331-5015 or go to www.familypride.org.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

I came upon a studious Jeff Maguire at a Southeast Portland cafe as he was preparing for the Medical College Admission Test. A senior at Reed College, he is a history major from Louisville, Ky. He transferred from Boston University, where he said there's a "huge gay scene for any age," because he wanted to be more academically challenged.

"Reed is one of the most liberal colleges I've been in," said Maguire, who is co-signator of the school's Queer Alliance. He points to the interesting and even ironic phenomenon that gay students at his school tend not to have other gay friends. "The community has no reason to unite because being gay is so accepted."

Last year, Maguire and co-founder Erin Giblin started the Greater Portland Intercollegiate Queer Society (GPICQS). In addition to creating more community at Reed, Maguire is working to create a larger social network in the Portland area.

"A lot of people come out in college, though the age is getting younger," said Maguire. "Or at least in college they can finally do something about it, and there's no way to meet people."

Though Maguire acknowledges that the Portland underage club The Escape offers a venue

for queer youth to gather, he believes that, despite popular belief, "a lot of the queer community doesn't like going to clubs and prefers different ways to be social."

It took him almost three months to contact 12 queer campus groups before the first GPICQS event last spring. According to Maguire, 100 to 150 students from other campuses came out for the event.

"But GPICQS is not a Reedocracy," Maguire clarifies. "Ideally each college will pick representatives from their campus groups to attend GPICQS meetings and will hold one to two GPICQS-open events per semester."

Maguire, who is getting his van driver's license so he can help get students home after late-night GPICQS fun, is planning the fall's first event for early October. "It'll be open and free to anyone with a college ID," Maguire said there will be speed dating at the event, to which he added, "We're still working it out for the bisexuals." This will be followed by food and dancing at The Escape.

For more information about GPICQS and its events, contact Maguire at maguirej@reed.edu. For the newest information on queer-friendly campuses, check out *Advocate College Guide for LGBT Students* (Alyson Books, 2006; \$21.95 softcover).

THE TRAINER

It makes me smile to imagine someone like Niks DePue standing in front of my high school health education class and letting me know it's OK to be me. The genderqueer 18-year-old, who grew up in Southeast Portland, is an active trainer of Bridge 13. A community education program of the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center, Bridge 13 is "a dedicated group of youth who are trained to lead workshops about the issues faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning communities."

"In eighth grade, I transferred from Sellwood Middle School because of harassment and getting beat up," said DePue. "I started at Mount Scott Center for Learning and graduated last June." The move really changed things for DePue, who had 100 percent attendance and a 4.0 grade point average the last two years and graduated second in her class.

On joining the SMYRC community and becoming a Bridge 13 trainer, DePue said: "It's been one of the most enriching and fulfilling experiences in my life. It's taught me to be proud of who I am and to get over my fear of speaking in public—especially about things no one cared to hear about before."

"I started going to SMYRC my freshman year. It helped me figure out who I was, connect with my family more and do better in school," said DePue. "I wanted to give back."

According to community education coordinator Mehera Scheu, Bridge 13 trains 500 people a year. "The program's main mission is to educate community members, to create supportive allies, decrease harassment and discrimination against sexual minority youth and to empower youth to tell their stories," says Scheu.

DePue, who co-taught the health class at Mount Scott because of her work with Bridge 13, enjoys the interactive nature of the presentations. She was surprised by a visit to the Oregon Department of Human Services in which the staff asked many questions. "When adults open up and ask questions, especially about trans issues, it makes me feel great because people are learning."

For more information about Bridge 13 trainings or to become a trainer, contact Scheu at 503-872-9664, ext. 38, or meheras@cascadiabhc.org.

THE FACILITATORS

There's no place like a home away from home. That's how I felt when I walked into SMYRC, located at 2100 S.E. Belmont St. SMYRC program director Jonathan Weedman gave me a tour of the fantastic facility where youth can hang out, play pool and foosball, silkscreen T-shirts, make snacks, work out and see performances.

Weedman and Stephen Dunlevy, who is a mental health counselor with Multnomah County's School Mental Health program, both have master's degrees in social work and have facilitated a number of local GSAs.

They talked with me about the importance of GSAs—how the clubs provide a bridge between queer and straight youth. "Just by existing in a school, GSAs bring up more awareness and dialogue that wouldn't happen otherwise," said Dunlevy.

According to Weedman, local GSAs range in size (from five to 30 members) and in focus (from social to support to advocacy). He said much of the clubs' viability depends on the involvement of a dedicated adviser and the school's climate.

The two began the Portland Metro GSA Network two years ago when they recognized a lack of opportunity for facilitators and youth of the various GSAs to get together. Their goals are to identify which schools have GSAs (so far they have found 25 in the 41 high schools of Multnomah,

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