

outstanding

Striving to Be Present

Glea Livingston is a woman who has served Multnomah County for 20 years and has been on the Community Engagement Team for the past four. Last month, she was the recipient of the Multnomah County Health Department's Public Health Hero Award in recognition for her work helping those members of our community who are often disregarded and overlooked: the chronically homeless.

My name is Glea Livingston.

I am known as a nurse. I work with the chronically homeless. That's anyone who's been homeless for a year or more. I help them find housing. A lot of these folks have criminal histories, mental health issues, drug addiction, and this makes it difficult for many of them to find employment and housing. Helping them keep the housing is often as difficult as finding it. It's understandable, though. I am also the secretary on the board of SHARE, Senior Housing and Retirement Enterprises.

My cause is really about relationships. For example, the people that over use emergency room care because they don't have health care. That affects all of us. It affects pocketbooks, at least. People who have drug addictions. Their addictions affect all of us. My cause really is about building those relationships so that people see that. That's my professional life and my personal life.

I am 57 years old. I feel about that old. It sounds like a lot bigger number than it feels like. In a lot of ways it feels better and better as time goes on. You get more self-confidence and more financial independence, but I also feel pretty adventurous. That's a young thing.

My childhood ambition was to travel the world. I'm getting ready to do a trip. I'm going to be working in a clinic in Peru for a week, partly vacation, partly working. It's a whole other way to experience a culture, much different than just being a tourist.

My first same-sex crush was on a nice straight girl probably. No, it was a friend, a co-worker. It was play and fun and very exciting.

I like to spend my down time gardening or reading. I also do a couple of volunteer jobs. I raise assistance dogs for people with disabilities. I have one dog now who is going to a 7-year-old boy, a golden retriever.

My proudest moment was being nominated Multnomah County Public Health Hero of the Year. I never expected anything like that. I feel like I'm just doing my job. I mean, you can Google Multnomah County Public Health and there I am. It's really quite the honor.

My biggest challenge is the disappearing health care services. I feel like a lot of my energy goes to advocating for my clients. Helping them make their way through the system, seeing their services disappearing. I have chats with myself that there isn't anything I can do about the system, but



Glea Livingston finds balance in the system.

what I can do is be totally present with that one person in front of me right now. One of my mantras I keep telling myself is, "I can be 100 percent present for this one person." Sometimes I can't do much else.


A perfect day in Portland would be spent at least part of it in Powell's. And I could putter in my garden all day. I have a lot of plants people have given me in my yard, so there's memories attached to the different ones. I have a friend who died of brain cancer, and some of her plants are in my garden, so it feels special to be out there.

My first job was in high school. I worked at a little grocery store across the street from my boarding school. It was summertime, and there was no one there. I lived in this huge dormitory for 200 women, and I was the only one there. I made 90 cents an hour, but it was a really long time ago.

My vice is dark chocolate. I love really good chocolate. I teach people about nutrition and healthy eating, so I feel kind of guilty about it.

My inspiration is some of my co-workers. We have some remarkable case managers who are brilliant people who have past histories of being on the street and being addicted, and now they are professionals that I really learn a lot from.

The last queer event I attended was a SHARE board meeting. I also go to Out Dancing. That's where I met my partner. I looked down the row and wondered what she was doing after class.

My highest hope for the cause is to keep my compassion even though I see all the suffering, pain and frustration that system causes. Keeping that balance is really a struggle. I find myself in a lot of ways searching for that balance because I can't change the system. I can only be with the person I'm helping right then. 

—Alex Baldino

just asking

Just Out asked those at Q Center's first anniversary party, "How have you taken advantage of the center?"



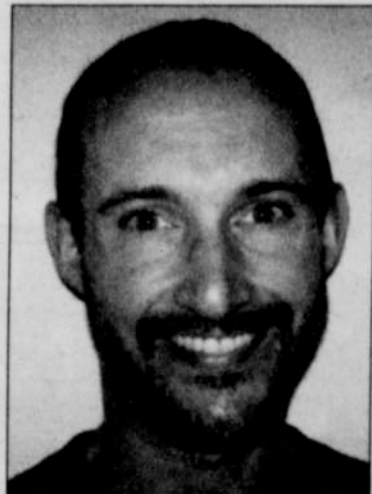
VERONICA LEDOUX
Bingo Player

"I just moved here from Chicago, and it was really nice to find this place, something that anchors the community."



JAMIE REA
Bicyclist

"It's a fun place to be able to come and talk to people, to play bingo with no smoke and no alcohol."



KELLY KIRK
Rose City Softball Association
Redwings Pitcher

"It's great that Q Center is here to give people an alternative to the bar scene. It supports education, arts and culture, communities and families. It's great to see gays and lesbians and transgender people together. It really shows the diversity of our community."



LUIS LOPEZ
Espresso Diva

"This is my first time here, but when I went to Gay Skate Night last month, I saw the importance of doing stuff related to being gay, related to myself, besides just going to bars."

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