



*Don't worry chief,  
I will be all right.*



*Valentino*

## ROSE CITY VETERINARY HOSPITAL

809 SE POWELL BLVD  
232-3105

### Experience the Difference!



#### EASTMORELAND CUSTOM \$925,000

Fabulous updated home with open floor plan, gourmet kitchen, 2 fireplaces, formal dining & living, in-ground pool & more all in a private setting.



#### OREGON CITY 1-LEVEL \$389,000

11902 Gentry Way - Over 2100SF of living space with open floor plan, vaulted ceilings, great room, formal living & dining, wide hallways & more.

**KELLIE JENKINS, Broker**

**Direct: 503-784-3535**

Office: 503-775-4699 x144

Fax: 1-800-866-0591

www.johnscott.com/kelliej

**John L. Scott**  
REAL ESTATE



## northwest

# Blood Ban

Leader explains controversial policy Red Cross must observe

by Jaymee R. Cuti

**W**hen Thomas Bruner left the helm of Cascade AIDS Project in August 2005, he puzzled over whether politics was in his future. Besides tripling fund-raising records at CAP and doubling the organization's budget, he was known for lending his voice to HIV/AIDS activism in Congress and the Oregon Legislature. But three months ago he returned to the nonprofit sector, in which he has worked for 20 years.

After a stint as policy director for former Multnomah County Chair Diane Linn in 2006, Bruner accepted a job as chief executive officer with the Oregon Trail Chapter of the American Red Cross.

While many associate the organization with the volunteer nurses on World War I battlefields or bringing relief to Hurricane Katrina victims, to some in the gay community, the Red Cross means discrimination.

Bruner discussed the federal Food and Drug Administration's controversial policy of banning blood donations from gay and bisexual men, which the Red Cross must enforce. Despite objections from the Red Cross and two other blood groups, as recently as May 23, the FDA vows to uphold the ban.

Bruner also shed light on his goal to change the policy, his plans for sexing up the company image and the business of saving lives.

**Jaymee R. Cuti:** When we last spoke after your resignation from CAP, you voiced an interest in public policy work. What drew you back to the nonprofit sector?

**Thomas Bruner:** I've always loved public policy and government relations. I've done that work for a long time in various capacities. My trip through Multnomah County gave me a front-row seat to politics at its meanest and most dysfunctional. While I loved my boss and my job, and the issues we were working on were important and intellectually stimulating, I was just appalled at the behavior that I witnessed, and it kind of took some of the wind out of that sail. That's not to say I'll never go back to it, but by the time I left that building on Dec. 31, I was not eager to go into any government building for a while.

**JRC:** Most associate the American Red Cross with blood donation and disaster relief. What else is your organization responsible for?

**TB:** One, it works to prevent disasters. Second, it works to prepare people and equip people for emergencies. The third is it responds to disasters and emergencies. The fourth thing is it's the single largest provider of the national blood supply.

The state is broken up in six chapters and this one, the Oregon Trail Chapter headquartered in Portland, includes seven counties. That comprises



Thomas Bruner has been on the job at Oregon's chapter of the American Red Cross for 90 days.

about half the population for the state [and is] by far the biggest in the state.

We are training about 34,000 people a year in first aid, CPR, how to use an [automated external defibrillator]. The common theme between all those trainings is, how do you save a life, whether the life is Katrina flood-related or somebody's house goes up in flames at 2 a.m. or somebody faints in the middle of a mall.

In Oregon, the Red Cross supplies 97 percent of the blood in the state.

People think about disasters nationally or internationally that we help with. What they may not realize is every 36 hours we're responding to a local disaster.

*"I had these same debates in HIV/AIDS work for 20 years: How do you take a threat that to so many is conceptual, and make that real, get people concerned about it today?"*

—Thomas Bruner

**JRC:** What battles are you fighting for the Red Cross?

**TB:** Here is the single biggest challenge that I face. This organization used to receive \$1.8 million per year from the local United Way. This year, we received nothing. Every year since 2001 it went down a little. So figuring out what to do about that—how to replace as much of that as possible—is No. 1 on my list. Luckily, my previous board had the foresight to create a healthy reserve fund, so that reserve fund has allowed us to not have to slash and burn. But we can't dip into it permanently.

Increasing the blood supply is another [challenge]. About 60 percent of the population is eligible to give blood. Only 5 percent do. When there's a tsunami in Southeast Asia or some big earthquake in Japan, people's awareness of disaster spikes temporarily. Just as quickly as it spikes, it goes away. Somewhere in between complete denial and this heightened level of angst is where we want people to be. I had these same debates in HIV/AIDS work for 20 years: How do you take a threat that to so many is conceptual, and make that real, get people concerned about it today?

The third challenge is that the American Red Cross is 125 years old. This chapter is 90 years old.

I think there are some people who view the American Red Cross as their grandmother's organization. They see voluntary nurses in starched white uniforms tending to the World War I battlefield, and we did that and we're proud of it. But this is the piece that they don't know much about. [Pointing to a modernly designed poster of volunteers responding to a fire] I want to make sure that our images are more current, that we're a little bit hipper. It's not changing our skin—it's expanding our relevance.

**JRC:** How great is the need for blood donations?

**TB:** Our summer months are the most difficult. People spend their time boating and hiking and camping and traveling to visit family, and they are less likely to think about donating blood or to make the time to go. In the summer our blood supply dips, and it is a critical time of year for us in terms of meeting demand and getting the word out that just because it's July and August doesn't mean we need less blood.

**JRC:** Please tell me about the ban on accepting blood from gay men?

**TB:** The ban on accepting blood donations from gay or bisexual men is not a Red Cross policy. It's a U.S. Food and Drug Administration policy, and it applies not only to the Red Cross but to the entire blood banking industry in the county. The