

northwest

Gay Networking Group Forms

Business is all about who you know, and making those connections is one of the most difficult challenges facing people new to the business world.

Jake Planton, a loan officer with Rose City Mortgage Specialists, chose to address this challenge by starting his own networking group. With the support of and help from his co-workers, he started The Next Level, a networking group aimed specifically at gay professionals.

"There just wasn't anything like it," he said. "It's for people young in spirit and passionate about business. It's for people who really want to make connections."

Planton explained The Next Level's role as a networking organization with relation to existing groups. "The Portland Area Business Association and other networking groups that are already established are really hard to break into, so I started my own."

Rose City Mortgage Specialists has a long tradition of supporting the queer community. In an effort to help Planton attract new clients, he offered to donate \$200 a transaction to Cascade AIDS Project. Rose City also has supported The Next Level by hosting the meetings in its "living room" with comfortable sofas, ample seating and a table for food.

Planton graduated from Portland State University with a major in broadcast journalism. "I just didn't like broadcast journalism. I worked at Starbucks through school, and I really liked it. One day a customer offered me a job at a lending company, and I took it."

Eighteen months after Planton moved from barista to loan officer, his company went out of business, and Planton found a position with Rose City Mortgage. "Rose City is great. They really put the customer first and have a commitment to sustainability and community. I especially like that they work so closely with the LGBTQ community."

The Next Level meets every third Wednesday at 5200 S.W. Macadam Ave. #300. For more information e-mail Planton at jake@rosecitymtg.com.

business watch

Underwear Models Come to Portland Pride

Portland's Under U 4 Men is bringing out more than just underwear to its first Pride festival. The Ginch Gonch Boys, Benjamin Bradley and Ethan Reynolds, are the brand's underwear models and on- and off-camera boyfriends. The pair will make several appearances during their first visit to Portland, which is sponsored by Under U 4 Men.

According to owner Steven Lien, Ginch Gonch instills fun in every pair of underwear by designing "little boys" underwear for men. From the fun fire truck pattern to the wild western series with bull rider and nice guns, Ginch Gonch is said to bring back the kid in all of us.

Look for the boys at Under U 4 Men's booth June 16 and 17 during the Pride festival, where items will be 30 percent to 50 percent off. The store will host a private party for the boys as a benefit for Basic Rights Oregon 8 p.m. June 16 at Boxxes, 1035 S.W. Stark St. Fans of the Ginch Gonch Boys can pick up a free entry wristband at Under U 4 Men, 507 S.W. Broadway. Lien and his partner, Larry Laughead, hope partygoers will donate to BRO to help fight the groups gathering signatures to repeal the new nondiscrimination and domestic partner bills.

Look for the Ginch Gonch Boys in the Pride parade June 17 and on the main stage during the underwear fashion show from 3:45 to 4 p.m. The International Adventure in

Underwear fashion show will feature models from the store and several of Portland's hottest guys strutting their stuff in the latest styles from C-IN2, Papi, Unico, Giulio and Aussie Bum, Ginch Gonch and Pulse. The Ginch Gonch Boys are sure to be the hit of the show, hosted by Sasha Scarlett. A special treat for the gals is a presentation of Ginch Gonch for women, with a surprise model. After the Pride festival, Under U 4 Men invites people to party with the guys at the Boxxes street party.

Rolfing Brings Healing

At some point we have all experienced some form of pain, be it from an injury, accident, disability or even the stress of our daily lives.

Benjamin Eichenauer was born with his left foot rotated so far inward that he would trip over it while learning to walk. He tried everything from yoga and Pilates to a leg brace and invasive surgery.

In his early 20s, depressed from the lack of success he found in spite of his multitude of treatments, Eichenauer tried structural integration. Structural integration—commonly called Rolfing after Ida Rolf, who pioneered the technique in the 1940s and 1950s—has been gaining popularity as an alternative healing technique in recent years. Rolfing strives to bring the body



Under U 4 Men brings the Ginch Gonch Boys to Portland for Pride festivities.

into alignment by addressing the connective tissue that the body is composed of. According to this philosophy, a pain in the shoulder could be from a misalignment in another part of the body, which in turn can throw off other parts of the body.

After the myriad treatments that failed Eichenauer, Rolfing brought about an end to his pain and brought his body into alignment.

Upon graduating from college and being unhappy working in the dotcom industry, Eichenauer attended the Rolf Institute and has been a certified Rolfer for almost five years. He has been practicing since 2003 in Portland.

In June 2006, Eichenauer found a home for his practice at Anisha. Anisha, a holistic health center in a converted Victorian house at 4031 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd., is home to six other holistic practitioners ranging from physical therapists to vision specialists.

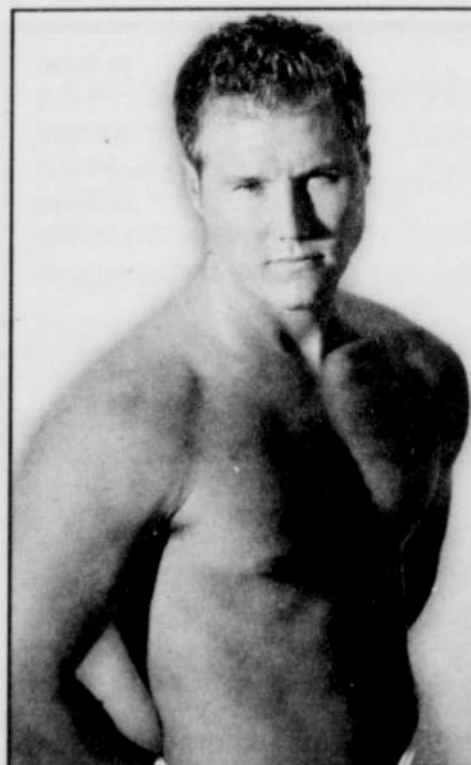
"I think alternative healing is becoming more popular because there's a lot of stress in our culture right now—stress from work, the media, wars. For a lot of people, there's a sense that things are falling apart. People are looking for and want a way to find peace and healing," Eichenauer explained. "Rolfing had a reputation of being painful and a little rough in the 1970s, but it isn't anymore. It's gotten tremendously refined and much more gentle in recent decades."

Since then it has gained popularity and was recently profiled on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* as well as in several lifestyle magazines. For more information on Rolfing in Portland, visit www.rolfingdx.com. 10

By ALEX BALDINO and MALKA GEFFEN



Jake Planton's networking group The Next Level helps gay professionals connect.



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