

northwest

One Umbrella

Friends of People with AIDS merges with Our House

by Malka Geffen

For the past 17 years, the Friends of People with AIDS Foundation provided for essential needs of clients living with HIV/AIDS. One of its programs, Tod's Corner, avails clients to free food, clothing, household goods, cleaning supplies, personal care items, pet food and more. Esther's Pantry, a vital community program that has provided thousands of people with food and personal care items, was taken over by the foundation in 2006. Our House of Portland, a nonprofit organization that has provided health and housing services for people with HIV/AIDS since 1998, assumes operational control of the foundation's programs June 15.

In April, the foundation's board chairman, Kevin Friends, announced his plans to retire at the end of June. He said he got involved with Friends of People with AIDS eight years ago as a weekly Tod's Corner volunteer. He later spent two years on the board before serving as board chairman for the past five years. In addition to running the board and overseeing daily operation of the foundation's programs, Friends spent many unpaid hours writing grants, attending fund-raisers, coordinating volunteers, looking for new sources of financing and picking up donations. He said his work with the foundation has helped him grow immensely as a person.

"To sum it up, it's been one of the best things that's ever happened in my life," he said. "One thing that stands out in my mind is how compas-

sionate and generous our community is and how easy they made my job."

Allen Brady, Friends of People with AIDS treasurer and co-founder and director of administrative services at Our House, said, "The board looked at options for a replacement chair, but the more we looked, we realized it would be virtually impossible to find someone." He said that Friends was also the de facto executive director and that the task of finding someone willing to volunteer more than 30 hours a week in this role would be monumental.

Our House executive director Wayne Miya echoed amazement at Friends' hard work. "Over the last year, instead of just Tod's Corner, [the foundation] took over Esther's Pantry, increasing the workload and growing its client base," he said. "I don't see how anyone can manage the programs effectively on a volunteer basis, in addition to raising money, keeping records, etc."

According to Brady, the Friends of People with AIDS board decided to look around for another organization in Portland to take over its programs. "Our House has a proven track record in financial stability and strong leadership and has adequate staff to assume administrative and other tasks," he said.

Miya added: "Since [Friends of People with AIDS] has an all-volunteer board and organization, Our House can give infrastructure and stability. If Kevin were to not be around or go on vacation or be

ill, it would leave the old organization without leadership. At Our House, we have a mature organization with a paid staff that can handle any issues that may come up."

Donald Kahapea, the foundation's one paid staff person, will continue as the community services coordinator for Tod's Corner and Esther's Pantry, although the Friends of People with AIDS name will no longer exist.

"The programs fit very well in our continuum of care," said Miya. "When we established our neighborhood housing and care program, we did so to try to help people maintain their independence and become more independent. This is another area where we can help, by providing the essentials of living, like food and clothing. A fun piece is providing pet care and dog food. Animals are such an important part of recovery."

According to Brady, Our House will also take over operations of the annual toy drive and holiday party, as well as cremation services.

"We were very thorough in what the merger meant to both [Our House and Friends of People with AIDS], and we tried to cover every base," said Miya. "The clientele don't have to worry that their next source of food won't be there next month."

Miya also said he spoke with executive directors



Kevin Friends (right), board chairman of the Friends of People with AIDS Foundation, hands operational control to Our House executive director Wayne Miya.

of other area AIDS organizations who are supportive of the merger. In terms of continued financing, Friends said he hopes that all of the foundation's past funders and donors will continue to support the programs through Our House.

While he looks forward to spending more time with his husband, David Connor, and their three adopted greyhounds, he's not getting off the hook that easily. Friends was unanimously elected May 31 to join the Our House board of directors. He was also elected to the Oregon Bears' board of directors June 6.

"I'm looking forward to a new chapter and new challenge in my life," said Friends. "Our House was the very first place I volunteered in Portland over 10 years ago as a breakfast cook and receptionist. I guess I've come full circle." 10

For more information about ESTHER'S PANTRY and TOD'S CORNER contact Donald Kahapea at 503-349-4699.

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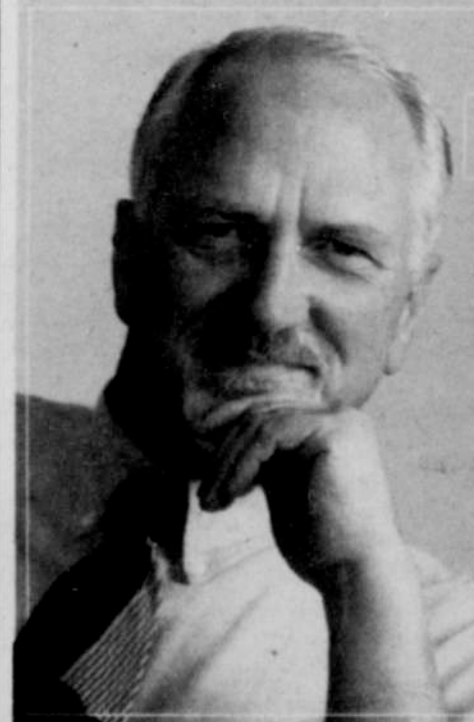
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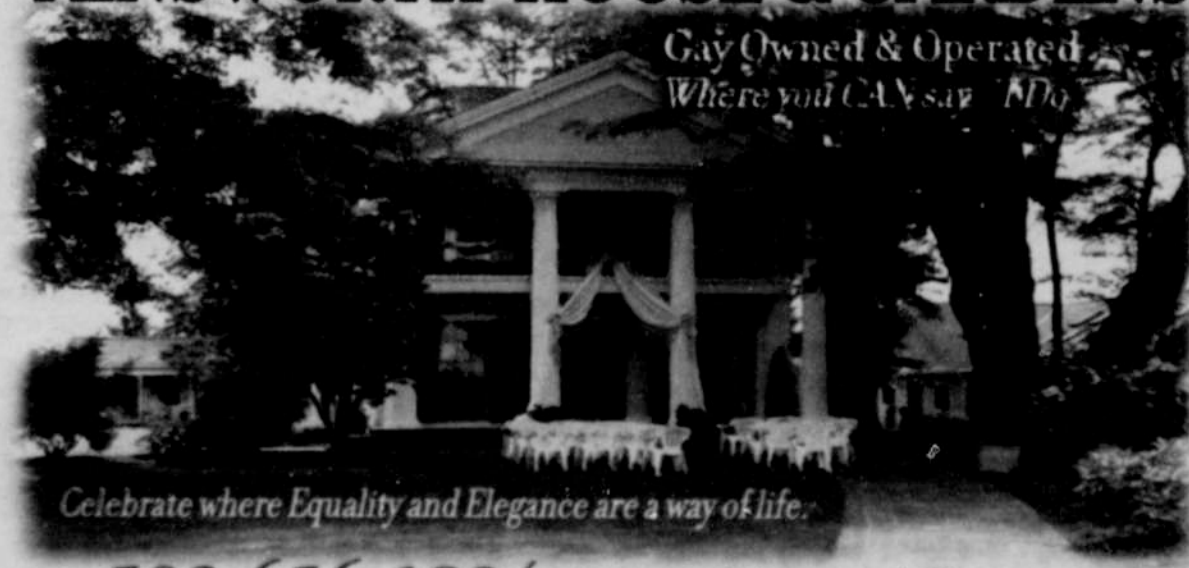
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