

## Friends in Need

Join *Just Out* as we collect canned food for the holidays

**G**rowing up, back in the olden times, Thanksgiving Day, in addition to being a holiday unto itself, also marked the official start of what was then known as "Christmas." Remember Christmas trees, and all that stuff? Ah, she's going to tell us stories from the old days, you say.

Nah, not so much. Instead I'm simply briefly noting the fact that Halloween has now come and gone and that its passage brought forth an immediate barrage of television commercials advertising products for the "holiday season." So, while on one hand we've lost Christmas, we do now have an extra month to plan, prepare and shop for it.

But I'm not here today to debate the merits or semantics of any of the winter holidays. Celebrate what you will, as you will, hopefully without a take-away from anyone else. What I would like for us to talk about instead is what this season brings to our city and our neighborhoods, besides gifts, decorations and festivities. Notably, this year especially, winter brings to far too many individuals and families increased hunger, cold and financial hardship. I'd also like to talk about ways that we, the gay, lesbian, bi and trans community, can come together to help alleviate a few of these problems for folks living in our greater community.

Last year, with your help, *Just Out* was tremendously successful, in a very short period of time, at gathering up thousands and thousands of dollars of toys and holiday gifts for children. We worked with one specific organization that took the toys and was responsible for getting them to the right people. For 2008, it's not going to be practical to collect toys. The group that we worked with in 2007 has changed its structure, and I wasn't able to find another organization that fit my vision of what we, working together, could accomplish.

But I found an equally important way for us to help. The food shortage in Oregon is crucial this year. Donations to food banks throughout the area have dropped dramatically. Rising fuel and energy costs are affecting spending and giving. Food banks are sitting with empty shelves.

For almost two years now, *Just Out* has collected canned food at our monthly Gay Skate Night. These donations go to Esther's Pantry, an organization that exists to help families affected by HIV/AIDS. Each month we come up with two to three boxes of food, and it makes a nice, albeit small, supplement to the other food that Esther's Pantry management has to procure and purchase elsewhere. I know that in lieu of toys this year, we can fill the shelves of Esther's Pantry with needed food. We can make a tremendous difference. I know we can do it because I saw what we were able to do last year.

The toy drive last year was a rousing success due in great part to the generosity of Pauline Miriam and the women of the Hot Flash Dance. Collecting toys was a spontaneous decision, and I was looking for a kickoff event to get us started. On the basis of a few small ads in *Just Out* and Pauline's mailing list, women showed up at the November dance with piles and piles of toys. It was a grand and amazing event, and it set in motion a network of other individuals and business owners who worked together to create a highly successful toy drive.

Let's do it all again in 2008, this time collecting nonperishable food items. The toy drive had a preset ending date, but food needs will continue throughout the winter, so we have even more of an opportunity to make an impact.

At this point you might be asking the question, "Why should I donate time, money and energy to an organization that doesn't specifically serve the gay and lesbian community?"


1. Like sex, it feels good. Over the holidays we'll hear, see and read much about "holiday blues" and depression. The last thing that I want to do is throw out clichés, but allow me this one. Helping others can make you feel better about yourself. Will buying a few cans of soup change your life forever? Probably not. But it sure as hell won't hurt, either.

2. Recently 55,000-plus Oregonians signed petitions in an effort to take away civil rights provided by the passage of House Bill 2007 and Senate Bill 2. Prior to that, more than 250,000 Oregonians, a quarter of a million of our neighbors, friends and family, signed petitions and then voted into law Ballot Measure 36, a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage in Oregon. What's this got to do with canned food? Hardcore activists will likely dismiss with anger the notion that good works should play a role in addressing voter alienation. We demand marriage, we demand equality. We settle for nothing less. Fine, good. But while we're waiting for that to work, how about we step up and put a giving face on the gay and lesbian community that so many Oregonians apparently fear and revile?

As winter cold and dampness find their way into Portland, we are also faced with coldness of a different nature. This winter finds Portland a bundle of raw nerves, nerves feeling the pain of anger, division and contentiousness. The news is filled daily with us vs. them stories. We're a jangled mess of bikers vs. drivers, neighbor vs. neighbor over street names, city government that battles homelessness and panhandling and health care advocates that battle anti-tax activists. Our ballot measures pit landowners and developers against planners and environmentalists. Smokers and nonsmokers face off daily. It's all becoming a tad wearisome. Let's take a break from it all and uplift ourselves above the gloom while bringing hope and help to others.

*Just Out* will be the warehouse for the food drive. We have lots of space now. To be successful we will need help from the Portland Gay Men's Chorus and from Pauline Miriam and the Hot Flash Dances. I need every Realtor and mortgage broker to make a donation and to challenge his or her competitors to do the same. I encourage The Adventure Group and PFLAG to contact their members. Rose City Softball: You're off season, but you have a large membership and can use your mailing list to make a tremendous difference. The Portland Area Business Association alone can make a tremendous impact by asking for donations at its November and December events. The bowling leagues can ask their members to bring food to the games, and a volunteer can bring it to *Just Out*.

Can we count on you, your organization and your business to help? Please contact me at [marty@justout.com](mailto:marty@justout.com) or at 503-236-1252, ext. 11, and let's make a plan.

In closing, I must acknowledge also that Pat Lanagan, owner of Eagle Portland, is still unhappy with *Just Out*. How do I know this? Well, he's been placing messages like this one shown here on the marquee at his North Portland business. Both *Willamette Week* and *The Oregonian* have noted the signs and called for comment. What can I say that hasn't been said before? Mr. Lanagan is certainly entitled to his opinion and expresses it freely. And so, to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, "You can please some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot please all of the people all of the time." In Lanagan's case, I don't see where there's ever going to be any pleasing him. As such, I deem it a better use of my time to go collect canned food. Pat, would you and your business like to join in? It would be the manly thing to do. 



MARTY DAVIS



JAMES HOOGES

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### NEWS

#### 8-17 NORTHWEST

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#### 18-19 NATIONAL

Shepard site launches; study suggests gay men earn less; gay candidate enters North Carolina race; Obama tours with anti-gay pastor; Giuliani said to support same-sex marriage ban

#### 20-21 WORLD

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