

Wet Yet Committed

Oregonians brave the weather to rally for basic civil rights

They came by car, by van and by big old bus from Eugene to get to Terry Schunk Plaza. They marched down from Portland State University. They came in hats and coats and warm, fuzzy scarves. They braved the mud and darkness to show that while we'll stand in the rain and cold, we will not stand for continued assault against our basic civil rights. Yes, they came by the hundreds and hundreds to attend the Rally to Defend Equality.

Basic Rights Oregon put on a great display of organizational skill. There were scores of volunteers, ASL interpreters and cordoned areas for media and bloggers. Parking was even reserved for out-of-town vans and buses. The sound system was top-notch, and the stage was well-positioned. The roster of speakers included many familiar faces, but new voices also joined the chorus of support. The Portland Gay Men's Chorus stood huddled in the rain and cold and then, with lowered umbrellas, turned and presented history in song to the soaked assembly.

A pack of soggy Salem legislators showed up to show their continued support for the work that they created in the last legislative session. They're sticking with us through the thick and thin of this. Yes, many are running for re-election or a new office, but damn, there are easier ways to get votes than standing in the rain for 90 minutes. They were there out of commitment. And yes, some people I would have expected to be there weren't, but you know, I wasn't in charge of roll call, and even the most supportive folks can't be everywhere all the time.

While crowds at the rally were standing in the cold rain and feeling the discomfort, a chilling of another nature is having an impact on a segment of our community. In Washington, D.C., President Bush and Congress are pondering an economic stimulus package as the newspapers and media bring daily talk of recession and woes. While Oregon, for the most part, still shows fiscal strength, the downturn in the housing market is starting to take its toll. Many fine Realtors and mortgage brokers who are a valued part of our community are starting to feel the pinch.

What's the importance of mentioning this? Well, for one thing, these fine folks are usually the ones responsible for sponsorships and financial contributions to nearly all the events and activities that go on in our community. If there's a banner, a program, a thank-you, it will likely include a logo from a generous Realtor or mortgage broker. Self-serving, you say; they reap financial rewards from this form of advertising. Not so much, trust me. There is no sponsorship or donation that begins to pay back the cost of the original investment in these situations. These folks are doing it because for some reason they collectively are driven by a desire to build community. If they are hurting, we as a community are going to feel the pain also.

The housing market will turn around. As home sales go down, the demand for rentals will go up. As that happens, rental rates will soar, people will realize they're better off owning homes, and buyers will return to the market. In the meantime, what can you do to help? It's true that buying a home isn't like grocery shopping: "Hey, honey, can you stop and pick up a two-garage ranch

on the way home?" But you can network; you can make referrals. When friends talk of buying, steer them in the direction of a member of our community. We'll all be better for it in the long run. And our softball teams, our film festivals, Pride events, theaters and choirs will receive the financial support they need to keep our community vital and thriving.

As I've mentioned before, and will again, 2008 is the 25th anniversary of *Just Out*. Plans are in the works for a series of changes and enhancements to the paper, from design and layout to coverage, columnists and distribution. Today I have news in two of these areas. First, in this issue I'd like to introduce you to two new columnists. Bringing gardening and the good life to the pages of *Just Out* is renowned blogger and woman of many skills and talents LeAnn Locher. As the "Sassy Gardener," she will be bringing you her own tips, designs, hints and photographs on how to achieve gardening nirvana in the Pacific Northwest.

And then we have Stephen Marc Beaudoin, who will likely never be writing about gardening. Stephen, who actually debuted in our last issue, is going to bring a unique perspective to the social and cultural elements of urban gay male life. And other things, I'm sure. Stephen will actually be wearing more than a columnist hat at *Just Out*; he will also be joining us as our newest Staff Writer. He comes to us brimming with story ideas and concepts. You're going to like his work.

One of the most frequent complaints I hear about *Just Out* is lack of distribution points. I hear you, folks, and I'm taking action. At this very moment there are 20 new bright purple outdoor boxes sitting in our carport. Starting this weekend they will be distributed throughout downtown Portland. They will look like no other paper rack in town and will easily stand out from the others. The goal is to have 50 of these out on the streets by the time our November anniversary rolls around. Check our blog at www.justout.com for a picture.

Will this make it easier to find papers in Gresham, Beaverton, Tigard and Tualatin? Nope. Sorry. Vandalism, theft and lack of high-traffic areas still make for problems in these parts. I do have my eye on a few key light-rail stops and park-and-ride lots, but these are not easy areas to access. TriMet is not friendly toward purveyors of free papers and their contrivances. While TriMet cannot control crime on its system, nor collect fares, it can dispatch a crew to remove an encroaching paper box in a heartbeat. My surviving old blue boxes, the ones that haven't taken root or permanently joined a brotherhood of racks, will be moved out to some areas outside downtown. Purple will rule in downtown Portland.

Finally, the first-ever "women seeking women" Bunco night at Q Center was an absolute success. Fun was had by all. We'll be doing it again Feb. 24. Guys, I'd happily set up a night of games for you, too. Will you come? Let me know. ☺

Check the JUST OUT blog at www.justout.com for daily updates on the Feb. 1 federal court hearings, which will determine the fate of Oregon's domestic partnership law.

reflections

15 Years Ago in *Just Out*... volume 10 number 6, february 1, 1993

- The National Organization to Halt the Abuse and Routine Mutilation of Males was founded to give voice to men who feel victimized by routine infant circumcision.
- *The Leather Journal* has announced the names of individuals and organizations in the West Coast region who were nominated by readers for the Pantheon of Leather Awards in 1993. Notable candidates are Women of the Year K.T. Chase, Sallee Huber and Susie Shepherd, all of Portland, and Madonna, of Los Angeles.
- As President Clinton begins his term of office and his promise to end the ban on "out" lesbians and gays in the military comes due, voices in opposition and support are becoming louder and more numerous.
- Colorado's state constitutional amendment eradicating gays' civil rights was blocked from taking effect as scheduled Jan. 15 by Denver District Court Judge Jeffrey Bayless, who said there is a good chance the measure will be found unconstitutional.
- An estimated 1 million people will be in the nation's capital April 25 for the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equal Rights and Liberation.

- The Bijou Cafe's First Tuesday Coffeehouse features D. Dines, Barbara Bernstein, Karen Harding and more.
- The Lesbian Community Project presents The Red Wing Roast, a benefit for LCP. Join Kathleen Saadat, Linda Shirley, the Rev. Gary Wilson and others for a dinner and roast in honor of *The Advocate* magazine's Woman of the Year.
- The Portland Area Business Association has announced that Oregon Superintendent of Public Instruction Norma Paulus will address the group's Feb. 8 lunch meeting. She will speak about the Oregon Education Act for the 21st Century and how the state's education system deals with gay and lesbian issues.

just out
Help us the love on gays in the military!
Call Linda Powell at 1 (703) 687-0121

February is BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Inside this issue:
The strong voice of a local African American lesbian, talking about community, her life and her daughter. (see page 13)
Also, an intimate look at AIDS, race and sexuality in South Africa. (see page 16)



FEATURE

22 COAST WITH THE MOST

Northern Oregon's coastal cities come out for Valentine's Day

NEWS

6-17 NORTHWEST

Gay candidates emerge for City Council race; registration open for queer youth conference; conference held for queer youth advocates; Latino Gay Pride announces lineup; Darklady joins free speech coalition board; Poison Waters honored for community work; gay Dems take office; preschool enrolls every family; Supreme Court hears hate speech case; hundreds rally for domestic partnerships; inn's struggle to keep history alive is resolved

18-19 NATIONAL

NGLTF leader steps down; Illinois trans woman fights for name change; New Orleans offers partner benefits; Heath Ledger dies

20-21 WORLD

South African AIDS leader marries; homosexual convictions of six Moroccans upheld; Brazilian gay activist murdered; Dutch artist receives death threats over gay Muslim photos; traveling government exhibit celebrates Czech gay history; protester found guilty in Riga Pride attack

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Woody Allen completes his trilogy of moral fables

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Portland singer/songwriter adds animal documentaries to list of accomplishments

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Mardi Gras is here



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