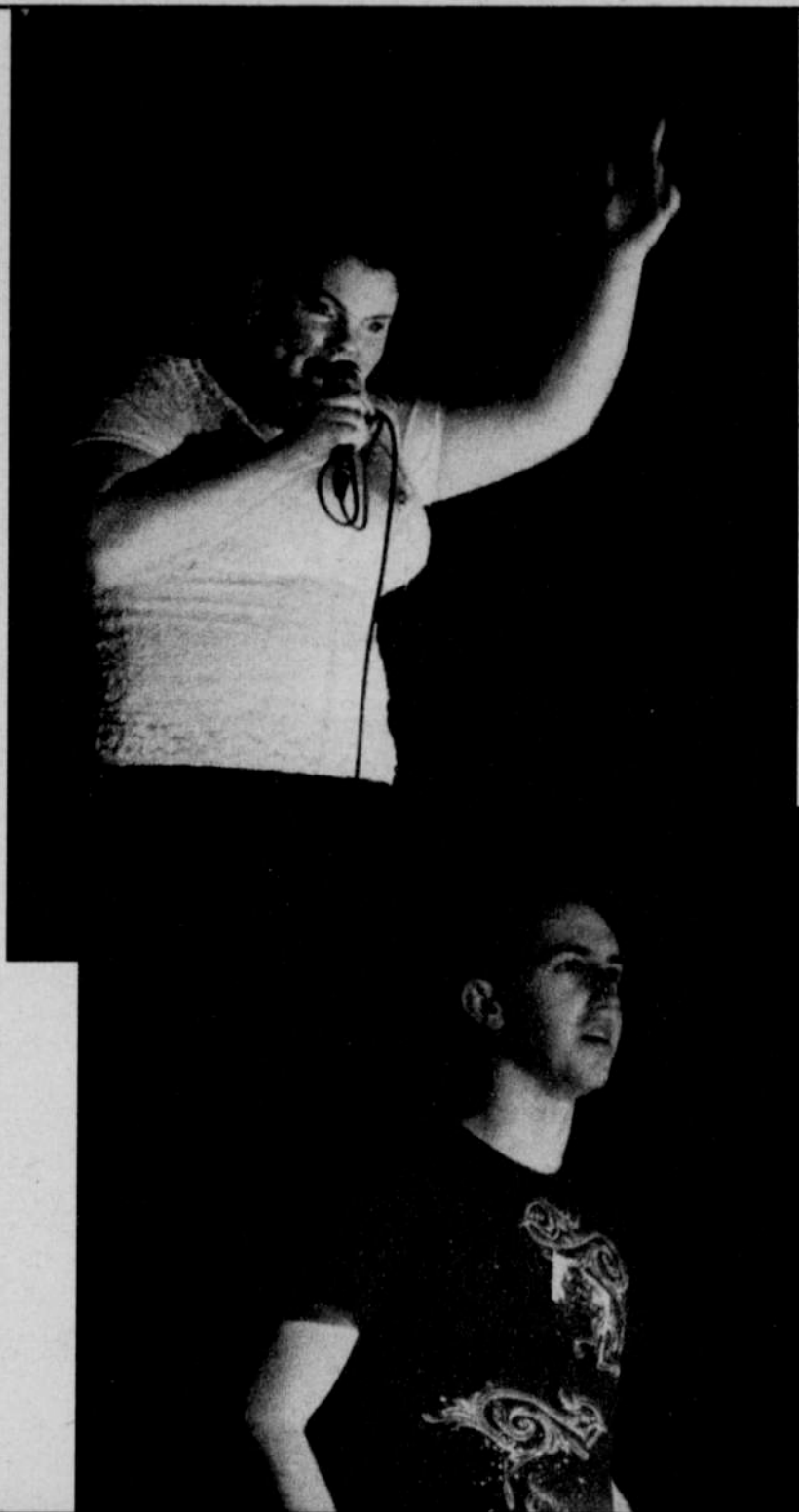


smycr10

CELEBRATING TEN YEARS



they continue to see. Facing homophobic comments and offensive questions are par for the course, and training meetings are frequently held to teach the Bridge 13 representatives how to handle the confrontations with aplomb.

Breathe Free is the tobacco-use prevention committee that puts together a zine highlighting the tobacco industry's marketing campaign for gays and lesbians and encourages youth to stop smoking or, preferably, to never start.

These groups and others in the array allow youth to develop their own self-assurance and speaking skills and to broaden their knowledge base. A leadership group gives a special focus on learning the skills needed by leaders and gives queer

youth ample opportunities to stand up and be heard. Learning to stand up to hateful language and how to stay safe at political rallies are among the myriad topics covered by the group's weekly meetings.

The lessons learned from teaching, talking and working to increase awareness of political and personal issues have proven to be inspiring for many, including Scott, who is working on ways to fit activism into adult life. "Could I do it as a full-time job?" Scott wondered. "I feel like if I'm not an activist, what am I doing?"

For those who came before

Scott, Rivas and the current collection of queer youth, SMYRC's focus on activism and leadership has played an important role in the path of their lives. Alley Hector, now 26, first got involved with queer youth groups in the days before there was a centralized resource center. As a 16-year-old in Vancouver, Wash., Hector was drafted to help start a queer youth group called Triple Point and, soon after, to help with the genesis of SMYRC. Working to put together the group's zine, *Personal Deity Proxy* (later renamed *It's in the Water*), Hector developed an interest in the publishing world, and "10 years later, I still write and design for queer audiences" as the blogger behind QPDX on OregonLive.com.

Aaron Scott (no relation to Tori Scott) was also around from the beginning, working alongside Hector, Gibbs and others to get SMYRC up

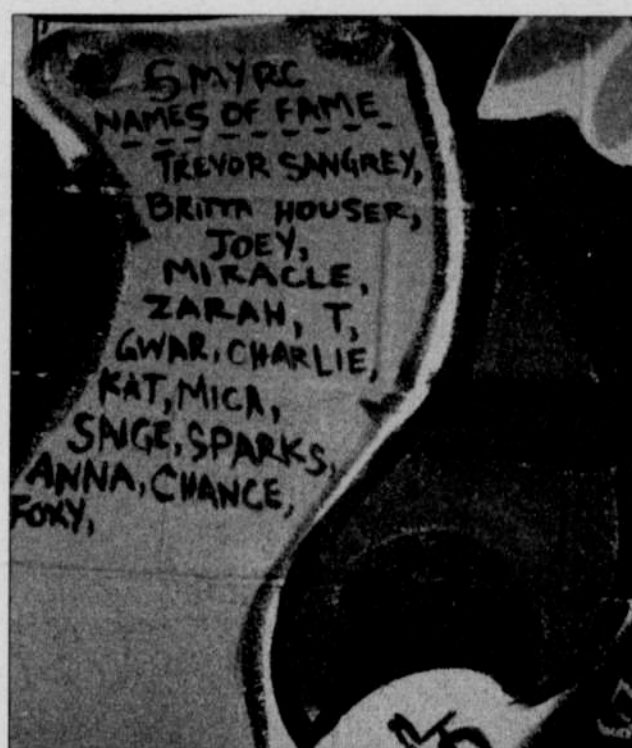
and going. Given the opportunity to get involved, he jumped in with both feet and was a frequent volunteer during the renovation of the first SMYRC office. He is attending Columbia School of Journalism in New York City and credits his involvement with SMYRC for his confidence. "It inspired me and built my confidence to be a more active member in groups, in my ability to navigate groups of different backgrounds and colored my politics to act more on the oppression of others."

A common thread for all who spoke about their experience with SMYRC was this inspiration to do more for the queer community and for other oppressed groups. A 20-year-old SMYRC youth who wished to be identified only as Martha recognizes the changes that the center's ethos has had on her. "It changes the way that you think about the world. It's changed the way that I treat people," she explained. "I'm aware of intentionally respecting people."

Respect. Activism. Freedom. Ten years ago, these were the driving ideas behind the development for a queer youth center. Today, kids from a new generation of youth are hanging out in a rainbow-colored room, plotting their own effects on the world around them and thankful for all those who've paved the way before them. **JO**

For more information about the SEXUAL MINORITY YOUTH RESOURCE CENTER visit www.smyrc.org.

Portland freelance writer and avid reader TERESA COATES is hell-bent on finding the best pho in town.



SMYRC décor gives nod to its history.

Celebrate SMYRC

In honor of the 10 years that SMYRC has been providing a place for queer youth in Portland, several events will be held in May. Put 'em on the calendar now:

- **SMYRC's 10th Anniversary Gayla:** An evening of music, food and wine, followed by a short presentation and silent auction to help raise money to support Portland queer youth. The fund-raiser starts 6 p.m. May 17 in Gerding Theater at the Armory, 128 N.W. 11th Ave. Tickets are \$50 (general) or \$75 (VIP) from www.smyrc.org. 21 and older. Tickets can be purchased at Funny Bone, 617 S.W. Washington St., and Haven Coffee, 3551 S.E. Division St.

- **Ten-Year Showcase:** SMYRC youth will host a free all-ages showcase to celebrate the 10 years of SMYRC. Youth from SMYRC's past and present will perform drag, spoken word and poetry. The event starts 7 p.m. May 10 at SMYRC, 2100 S.E. Belmont St.

- **Community Barbecue:** A community barbecue hosted by Mr. Oregon State Leather Ben Brown Jr. and Ms. Oregon State Leather Coral Mallow and sponsored by Blackout Leather Productions will celebrate SMYRC's 10th anniversary. Free and open to the public, the event runs from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. May 3 at SMYRC, 2100 S.E. Belmont St.



Open mike nights are popular on SMYRC's renovated stage.

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