

# letters

## Consider It Brought

TO THE EDITOR:

I was disheartened after reading Stephen Marc Beaudoin's editorial "Buyer Beware" [May 30].

After Mr. Beaudoin conducted a lengthy interview with me, I can only conclude one of two things: Either I failed at representing the hard work this board has done over the past several years to make Pride less corporate, or Mr. Beaudoin was simply paying us lip service by interviewing us and had a clear agenda, which he was unwilling to stray from. Knowing the content of the interview, I would err on the side of the latter. I think this is a highly unethical practice.

To clarify some information I shared with Mr. Beaudoin, which did not make it into his editorial, I am referring to the notes I used during our interview.

1. Despite Mr. Beaudoin's claims, securing funding for Pride is a struggle every year. We do not have "companies [corporations] dying to shell out big cash to Pride." I was very clear that our best guess on why we had a reserve at the end of the year is the dramatic overhaul of our entry process. In years past, people with aprons stood in a wide berth as people poured into the festival. Last year we had cash boxes, turnstiles, security guards and orderly lines. This is much more conducive to collecting donations. Gate revenue exceeded projections by 38 percent, whereas sponsorship funding was just *under* our projections. Approximately 18.31 percent of our revenue from last year came from sponsorships, and only four of those were national corporations. *Only three of our monetary sponsors this year are national corporations.*

2. In regard to our reserve, Beaudoin quips, "Great—now where's the community payback?" This year Pride Northwest sponsored and provided monetary or other services for Black Pride, Portland Gay Latino Pride, the Northwest Film Festival, Basic Rights Oregon, Q Center, Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest and Our House. We also provide a youth tent (run by the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center) and a family tent (run by Pregnant/Planning Lesbians of Portland). Additionally, I informed Mr. Beaudoin that with some Pride celebrations going under, our goal is to have a rainy day fund so if we had a bad year, there could still be a Pride the following year. Sustainability and giving back are our goals.

3. Many of the corporate sponsors Mr.

Beaudoin notes in the parade are not our sponsors; they are queer *employee* groups who paid nothing more than an entry fee. *This year, about 90 percent of parade and festival participants are local nonprofits, local businesses and community groups.*

Finally, I would have been happy to share the meaning of this year's theme, "Pride. Bring It." With all of the hard work this community has been doing to secure the rights of queers in this state, it is up to each of us to become activists by coming together in solidarity to sign up to give back to the community at the Pride festival. Boycotting Pride is not the answer, bringing "it" is.

HANK RENFROW

Pride Northwest Board Member

## You're Gonna Miss Me

TO THE EDITOR:

I'm guessing you might get a handful of angry e-mails regarding the "Corner View" article titled "Buyer Beware."

Pride festivals across the country are a symbolic event. As a young queer kid, Pride was something I looked forward to all year. It was the one event where I could find "my people" and feel like a part of something bigger. It is an institution, a place for the young kids to find a touchstone away from their suburban hellholes and an opportunity for all of the older gay and lesbian folks to reap the benefits of all of the hard work they've done to get us to a place where we can gather in public and celebrate our community.

It's not always perfect, and the realities of planning any volunteer-led event include the need for corporate sponsorship. Ask anyone on the planning committees where the money is coming from and going to, and you may find the realities are not that corporations have "bought Pride" but that they are very helpful in helping defray the costs of this very expensive institution. (For example, last year corporate sponsors contributed about 25 percent of the total cost of Pride.)

And I'm not sure what Mr. Beaudoin's problem is with the gay employee groups of corporate entities, but I just have to say this: Isn't it nice to live in a time where people can be out and proud in the workplace? I, for one, applaud the organizers of Pride Northwest for keeping it going during a time of inexplicable "Pride fatigue."

Your writers can piss and moan about "how

bad Pride has gotten" all you want, but I bet they'd sure miss it if it were gone.

AIMEE GENTER

Portland

## Right on the Money

TO THE EDITOR:

A friend sent me Stephen Marc Beaudoin's column about Pride and corporations with the recommendation that I write you an angry letter.

Well, I just read the column and am deciding to write in support of his position. Why I'm doing so is this: because Portland Pride has become a sanitized, boring noncelebration of LGBTQ "pride" with no real meaning or purpose. And I think, like Beaudoin, that corporations taking over the festival have something to do with it.

I haven't been to other Gay Prides around the country or the world to know what they look like or feel like, but I know I am sick and tired of having so many businesses and corporations pushed on me during the Pride festival and having my pride being sold out to top-dollar sponsors.

Now, wait. I understand that Pride festivals need to do fund raising to sustain their operations; I'm not naive. But why should they also ask for donations from private citizens to underwrite the festival if their corporate sponsorships are so flush? It just doesn't make sense.

I didn't agree with 100 percent of what Beaudoin wrote in *Just Out*, but I thought his points about Pride festivals needing to be more about community and activism and engagement as opposed to hawking your goods and "attaching a price tag to each of our queer bodies" was important and interesting.

I bet he got some hate mail for having the guts to write that. I, for one, think he's right on the money (no pun intended).

ANTHONY "TONY" GRAMBLE

Portland

## Backbone of the Community

TO THE EDITOR:

I fully understand the desire to give your writers the freedom to express their views, but I must say I was shocked to see this come from *Just Out*.

To characterize the entire Pride festival as nothing more than a corporate money-grubbing festival is nothing short of completely cynical. For

years I have hosted my booth at Pride and had the opportunity to talk with every facet of our community, from young people just coming out to old people just coming out. People come from far and wide to get to be a part of a special occasion where one day a year they get to be the majority. I have talked with men in dresses and women in not much of anything who get to be *proud, open and free*.

And I am one of the people your reporter doesn't like. I have been there for my business. Without the *many* dedicated members of the GLBT community who support everything from our local gay and lesbian choirs to Our House to the Portland Lesbian & Gay Film Festival and, oh yeah, Basic Rights Oregon, most of those groups would not exist. Those businesses that your reporter finds so offensive are the ones that are the backbone of the groups fighting for our rights.

GARY BOYER

Portland

## History Lesson

TO THE EDITOR:

I am a Wells Fargo team member who has participated in Portland's Pride festival, and I'm offended by Stephen Marc Beaudoin's "Buyer Beware" column in the May 30 edition of *Just Out*.

I think what Beaudoin fails to see is that for many of us, walking in the Pride parade under our employer's banner isn't so much about selling a product, but showing our individual pride in working for a company that supports who we are in the workplace.


As a Wells Fargo team member, I take a lot of pride in the fact that I don't have to worry about "being out" at work. I want Portland to know that Wells Fargo isn't afraid of associating its name with the gay community.

Beaudoin should also do some homework and look into how much money these large corporations he is quick to shun donate to GLBTQ organizations.

In return, for one weekend out of the year, we celebrate our pride and commitment to the community.

Beaudoin says he doesn't need to remind anyone of the activist, radical spirit of Pride festivals of the '60s and '70s where queers gathered for community, action and purpose. First of all, I wonder what a 28-year-old really knows about

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## Naked in the Rain

a novel by Eowyn Wood

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