



This *Oregonian* newsclip from the 1980s includes Portland gay rights pioneers Bill and Ann Shepherd, Marge Work Lunan, Lady Elaine Peacock and Patricia Keeney at Portland Pride.

explains that people still come to PFLAG saying: "My son just came out. He's 17, and I don't know what to do about it."

That part of PFLAG will never go away. But PFLAG is also taking on new challenges.

There are three areas where Portland PFLAG is doing additional work, explains Holt. One is with the transgender community. As a national organization, PFLAG has an active focus on the transgender community called T-Net; it features resources on the Internet and a Portland-area coordinator. Holt has noticed that attendance usually goes up when PFLAG meetings focus on transgender needs and resources.

A second focus for additional work is in communities of color. PFLAG received a grant from McKenzie River Gathering Foundation to reach out to African Americans and to hire a community organizer, and is working with Unity Project of Oregon in this endeavor. In April the budding group held a kickoff event that drew about 50 people.

"It kind of turned into a PFLAG meeting," says Holt. "People talked very passionately and very openly about what it is like to be an African-American young person and to come out."

Holt explains that the goal is to have an African-American chapter. "It is going to be a long-term process," she says, "but the connections in the African-American community that we needed to make have started."

Antoinette and Keith Edwards are one such connection. "Antoinette is one of our very strong parental advocates," says Teri Noble of PFLAG Oregon State Council. "Keith spoke at the event in April. He stood in front of this wonderful group of people and just said, 'We really have to defend

our kids.' His role as a strong, supportive dad is really a treasure."

A third focus is in building connections with community organizations that are doing similar but not identical work. The groups include the Community of Welcoming Congregations, Basic Rights Oregon and Unity Project of Oregon.

Holt finds the heart and soul of PFLAG during the monthly meetings when she sits in a smaller group with other parents and gay folks to talk and share experiences. "I don't think a meeting goes by when I don't leave being warmed by how much magic happens when you just put people in a safe space and let them talk openly with one another," she says. "That is how PFLAG changes people's minds. It is that one on one. It is amazing."

As Holt looks back on past accomplishments and the work that still needs to be done, she says PFLAG "is the only organization that I have been a part of where just love is the bottom line." 10

The 25th anniversary celebration will be part of the regular monthly meeting for PORTLAND PARENTS, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF LESBIAN AND GAYS from 7 to 9 p.m. July 8 at First United Methodist Church, 1838 S.W. Jefferson St. Members will observe the anniversary by looking back to honor the pioneers of Portland PFLAG and those who have kept the organization going, then sharing plans for the future. Many people who have played a key role in PFLAG have been invited to share their stories, including Charles and Rita Knapp, Marge Lunan and Susie Shepherd. For more information visit www.pflagpdx.org.

Portland freelance writer PAT YOUNG is a gay and lesbian historian.

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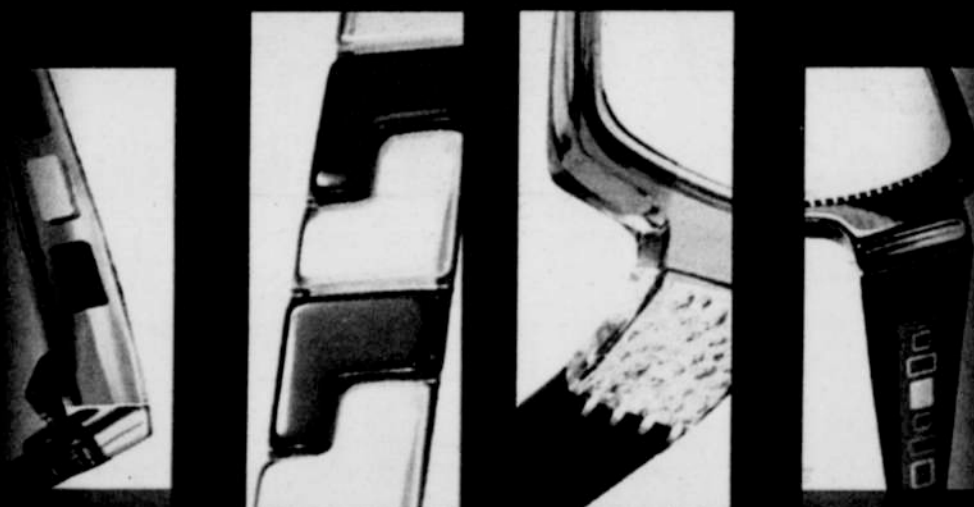
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