

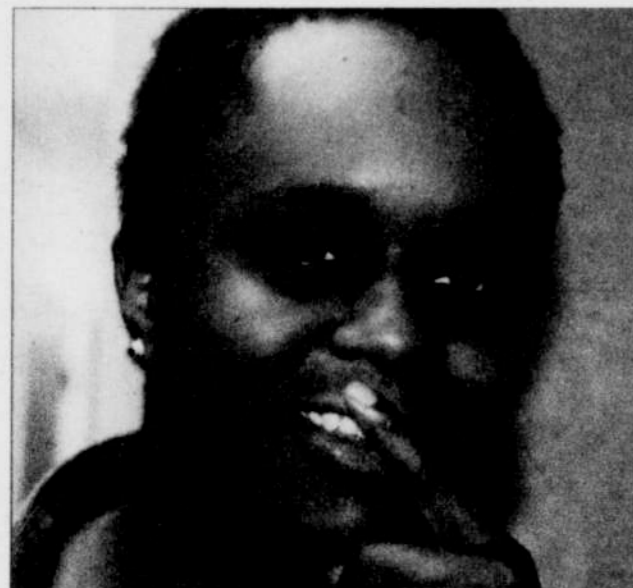
# northwest

## Former Nonprofit Director Under Suspicion

When Unity Project of Oregon executive director Alisa Simmons resigned Sept. 11, board members say she left a fiscally devastated organization.

"It affects us dramatically. It's hurt all the board members that have been working extremely hard to keep this organization afloat, and it hurts the community. It breaks trust. I think the organization is a little bit devastated right now," said board vice chairman Kevin Bailey-Gilliam.

Simmons is being accused of embezzlement, forgery and theft of property from the organization she led for one year.



Alisa Simmons denies accusations that she misappropriated funds as executive director of Unity Project of Oregon.

The Unity Project board informed the Multnomah County District Attorney's office of the claims that Simmons paid for meals, drinks, gas, personal items and even her rent from the Unity Project budget. Charges have not yet been filed.

Simmons denies the accusations and says she will fight all charges. She claims the organization actually owes her back pay that she initially chose not to pursue.

"I'm owed more in back salary than they claim I took," Simmons told *Just Out*. "I fought so hard to bring in money to the organization that them accusing me of stealing does not make sense."

Simmons estimates she raised \$157,000 for Unity Project and met monthly with the board treasurer. "It's complete bullshit. They had access to the books," she said.

According to Bailey-Gilliam, Simmons acted in violation of the organization's bylaws by using Unity Project's debit card without the authorization of both the board chairman and treasurer. He estimated debit charges at between \$4,500 and \$6,000 in personal expenses.

Board chairman Craig Tyson is pressing charges against Simmons for allegedly forging his name on a check to her landlord.

Bailey-Gilliam also accused Simmons of taking a Unity Project laptop and checkbook ledger with her when she resigned and immediately moved to New York. In addition, he said bylaws were violated when she allegedly opened and maxed out a credit card for \$13,000 in the organization's name

with Simmons as the lone signer on the account.

Bailey-Gilliam says the board has traced the alleged unauthorized spending as far back as January.

According to the Oregon Revised Statute, aggravated theft, which is defined as theft in excess of \$10,000, is a Class B felony, punishable by restitution, fines, probation or prison.

Simmons has retained the services of an attorney. Tyson is working on a grant to hire an interim executive director that specializes in rebuilding organizations in similar situations.

## Lesbian Duo Fight E. Coli with Benefit

It only took Kristy Geffen a few hours after eating E. coli tainted food to feel the stomach pains that later developed into full renal failure—but it took 32 days in the hospital, half a million dollars of surgery and plasma from the other side of the country to get her back on her feet.

The Portland massage therapist nearly lost her life in the harrowing incident. "I was pretty lucky," she says by phone, her voice quiet and underpowered after being sapped of energy from the hospital stay. At the lowest point of her stay, she was given only 10 percent chance of survival.



A concert is planned to benefit Kristy Geffen, who nearly lost her life to a fight with E. coli.

Things have turned around for Geffen since then. She's back to playing in the yard with her mutt, Myra, and back to work part time doing medical billing work for a friend to help make ends meet. "I'm pretty tired still," she says, "but I'm getting my energy back."

Later this month, Geffen will get a big burst of energy

and support to offset the astronomical cost of her emergency; her medical bills, though partially covered by insurance, totaled about \$10,000. She and her partner, former *Just Out* Staff Writer Malka Geffen, have decided to both celebrate her miraculous recovery and raise money to pay off those bills by throwing a "Happy Kidneys" benefit concert 7 p.m. Nov. 21 at Portland Ecotrust Conference Center, 721 N.W. Ninth Ave. The benefit features some of their favorite Portland indie musical acts: Sarah Dougher, Little Beirut and Malcolm Rollick.

Of the musicians on the bill, Geffen says Dougher means a lot to the couple. "Malka made me a CD of Sarah Dougher when we first started dating."

Admission to the benefit is \$15-\$25 sliding scale, and more information is available at [www.owlsoup.com/happykidneys](http://www.owlsoup.com/happykidneys).

Continued on Page 8

Let us do the work for you.

**Home & Loan Confidence**

**LISA CHEMARIN**  
Oregon Realty, Broker\*  
Office 503-297-2523  
Direct 503-407-3571  
[www.oregonrealty.com/LisaChemarin](http://www.oregonrealty.com/LisaChemarin)  
\*Also Licensed in Washington

**JENNIFER SANTORO**  
Platinum Mortgage Group, Inc.  
Senior Mortgage Broker  
Office 503.620.0715  
Direct 503.890.5965  
[www.oregonloan.net](http://www.oregonloan.net)

**Available when you are!**

Oregon PLATINUM MORTGAGE GROUP, INC.

**PASSADORE PROPERTIES**  
REAL ESTATE SERVICES GROUP  
503.292.8595 [www.passadoreproperties.com](http://www.passadoreproperties.com)

**BUY. SELL. RENT.**

PROPERTY MANAGERS / REAL ESTATE BROKERS

Pamper Yourself! Come In To A Clean Home After A Hard Day

Locally Owned & Serving Our Community Since 1997

**Beary Clean**  
503.206.1222 • 503.644.6814

Homes • Apartments • Offices • Free Bids  
Move In/Outs • Regular Schedule • Special Occasions

Visit My Website: [www.BearyClean.net](http://www.BearyClean.net)

**JUDITH ARNELL JEWELERS**

"When wearing the watch I experienced drastic changes in both my performance level and energy level."

The best evidence is you.

**PHILIP STEIN**  
Pool it

320 NW 10th Avenue - Between Everett & Flanders ph: 503.227.3437 [JudithArnellJewelers.com](http://JudithArnellJewelers.com)

**COLLECTIBLES INCLUDING:**

- Patricia Breen Ornaments
- Nutcrackers
- Plush animals
- ...and much more!

**Christmas AT THE ZOO**

118 NW 23RD AVENUE (503) 223-4048