



COURTESY OF YWCA CAMP WESTWIND

camps for six years before Theissen and her partner discovered CampOUT. Theissen says the feeling of family and community was such a positive experience that she wanted her older children to join.

"It was a great family time together," says Theissen. "We have returned every year since. The friendships that I have made at Camp Westwind continue to be some of the most important in my life."

For Theissen, part of the attraction to the camp is its inclusion of straight children and, later, their own spouses and their children—completing in her case three generations of campers, LGBTQ or not.

"It is a safe environment where families can be together, being exactly who they are without any of the bigotry of the outside world leaking in," says Theissen. "This is no small thing. LGBTQ families deal with bigotry every single day in their lives. Being in a place with the absence of that oppressive environment is a great gift."

Kunkel agrees, emphasizing the welcoming nature of CampOUT for younger campers.

"I think definitely it helps [children of same-sex couples] feel like they're not alone," relates Kunkel. "Some of them might go to schools where they're not socializing with other kids who have same-sex parents. I feel it's giving them that social confidence and independence piece that they're not alone and they're building these friendships, then coming back year after year and they're really excited to see those people."

Imo Talbert has been at CampOUT for 35

summers and was previously on staff and volunteered with YWCA. She, her part-

ner and their two adopted girls still make the trek to Camp Westwind every year.

"CampOUT feels a lot like a family reunion," explains Talbert. "We have watched each other's children grow up and each summer we get to meet new members of the family. It is very affirming to see so many healthy, happy families."

The camp is also a place where straight couples can bring their questioning youth, says Kunkel. The fact that CampOUT is run exactly the same way as any of the YWCA's family camps solidifies the sense of openness the organization strives for.

"It's not just for same-sex couples; if a family has a youth that is just coming out or has come out and they want to have a family experience, this is a great place to come."

"Last summer we had a kid who was 12 and who's been coming since he was about 6," continues Kunkel. "He was looking around and he said, 'You know, this is the first summer I've actually realized that this was a camp for same-sex couples?'"

Registration for CampOUT this year is currently just over half capacity. Now that the word is out, where will you hang your camping hat? ☺

Registration for CampOUT, running August 10-14, is \$275 per adult, \$245 per child. Financial assistance forms and further registration information can be found at ywca-pdx.org.



POLITICS OF LOVE

A WEEKEND OF RECOGNITION
HONORING THE 7TH ANNIVERSARY OF
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Saturday, March 26, 2011

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2:00 PM GEN SILENT

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Sunday, March 27, 2011

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