

Are 4,000+ people that hard to notice?



Pivot Brings Back Billboard Campaign Following Hawthorne Bridge Assault

In successive June weekends, Cascade AIDS Project has set up photo shoots—one at the Rainbow Room, one at Scandals—for male couples to be part of portraits, and pose in affectionate embrace. Not surprisingly, the project was conjured just a week or so following the assault of Pivot coordinator Brad Forkner and his boyfriend Christopher Rosevear, who were reportedly attacked for holding hands while crossing the Hawthorne Bridge May 22. Those who took part in the photo shoots could do so only by agreeing that CAP and Pivot could use the images for their outreach campaigns—including on brochures, the website and beyond.

That also includes billboards—a marketing campaign you may recall put Pivot's rebranding efforts in the local spotlight last June. But in defiance of the kind of violence that continues to take place in Portland around Pride season, CAP and Pivot are engaging in yet another billboard campaign, with the first to go up around the end of June.

"After the Hawthorne incident, where we saw one of our staff attacked for holding hands with another guy, it made us realize we've still got a long way to go in normalizing images of gay affection," explains CAP executive director Michael Kaplan.

Cascade AIDS Project's Men's Wellness

Center underwent a rebranding campaign last June to become Pivot. Billboards promoting the change featured the image of two men kissing, sending some commuters—and syndicated political radio DJ Lars Larson—into hysterics about the exposure of a gay kiss in the public eye.

"When I saw the billboards, I thought they were pretty innocuous," Kaplan said at the time. "They did some racier images and some things that we ended up not using, but I thought [those] were pretty tame."

The new billboard campaign will feature 17 10-foot-by-22-foot boards and one extra large one. The images taken from the photo shoots are to be finalized for the campaign by Friday, June 17. Once the billboards are up, they will remain for a month.

Fittingly, the end of June marks the 30th anniversary of the first documented cases of what would later become known as AIDS. Today, 33 million people worldwide live with the disease, of which 1.2 million are in the United States.

"There are dozens of reasons to take notice of this important milestone," Kaplan said in a statement. "CAP has been fighting HIV and AIDS for 25 of the last 30 years, and the incidence of new HIV infections has not gone down in over a decade. The good news is we haven't seen an increase."

Kaplan stressed the need to continue to teach safer sex practices, and the important puzzle-piece of reducing gay-related stigma, and HIV/

the state's largest newspaper."

Bhatia posted a comment on the organization's blog in an attempt to "set the record straight."

"It was a mistake on the part of staffers in charge of weekend coverage that there was not coverage of the rally in *The Oregonian*," Bhatia wrote. "It was human error, pure and simple. We should have covered the event."

But he contested the idea that the omission reflected a conservative political or moral perspective.

"Please be clear: There is no ideology involved in our coverage decisions, from the left or the right. Suggestions that *The Oregonian* has moved rightward in its coverage is nonsense, just as are the more common assertions from the right that we have a left bias," Bhatia wrote. "News coverage decisions are made by the newsroom. In this case, we made a bad one."

Whatever the reason for ignoring the ral-

ly—which was covered by nearly every major media outlet, include Fox 12 News—the story's absence was felt.

"This rally was a significant and newsworthy event. It was covered by almost every major media organization in the region and even national outlets," said Debra Porta, president of Pride Northwest and chair of the Multnomah County Democratic GLBT Caucus. "To be ignored as nonexistent by Oregon's largest newspaper and self-proclaimed voice for the region is not only offensive, but demonstrates poor journalistic standards."

Progressive Oregon had called *The Oregonian* out for failing to report on the rally, which had an estimated attendance of more than 4,000 people, while covering 15-person Tea Party demonstrations. The organization delivered a petition on June 7 signed by more than 1,400 people to the newspaper's publisher.


—ERIN ROOK

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