

LGBTQ ALLIES

Text by Alley Hector Photography by Horace Long

Immersed in Portland queer life can feel like we live in a world without straight people, but even here the reality is that we are still a minority. But we are part of the majority of a local community that is accepting, loving, and “has our back.” When I sat down in the Q Center’s library, surrounded by rows upon rows of LGBT themed books, with three straight married couples, nothing was more apparent. It was a feel good moment of the highest order and helped me remember that heterosexuals are part of our community and part of our movement. They are excited to be part of it. They are happy give us their time, money and friendship, and we need them.

I was raised by one of the staunchest allies I know, and during the course of the interview I heard very familiar words coming from the mouths of Mark and Tracy Fenske, Chris and Monica Reed, and Lisa Watson and Peter Shanky, though they themselves are a diverse group of people. Mark and Tracy work in finance. Chris and Monica own A Word in Edgewise eco-printing company and Lisa and Peter own the tasty Cupcake Jones bakery. Different generations, raised in different places and from different religious and ethnic backgrounds, they hold many similar beliefs and had familiar and relatable tales to tell.

One of my mother’s favorite stories is that of her best friend’s coming out to her. When Lisa started palling around with another girl in Jr. High, Jill Hector was angry and hurt. But when she found out it was a love interest all was forgiven. You could be stupid when it came to boys, when it came to a crush, just as long as another BFF wasn’t taking her place.

The six people I sat with at the Q Center also have important gay people in their lives. These early influencers helped lead them into a world where they proudly proclaim they are not just allies, but advocates for LGBT people. Here are their stories...

On how they became involved.

Lisa Watson: My first friend to die of AIDS died in 1987. I did my first AIDS Walk shortly after and became an activist.

Chris Reed: I was hijacked. My best friend turned us onto PABA (the Portland Area Business Association for



Mark, Tracy, & Reggie Fenske