

Yes for Equality

Good news, good news!

Things in Queerville are going great. You might not be tuned into the homo info stream, especially if all your news is "Fair and Balanced."

But if your gaydar is at all functional, you're picking up on at least some of Oregon's bountiful happy happenings. If not, here's an update.

Redmond now recognizes domestic partnerships. Redmond! Wasco County passed an ordinance banning discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Everybody say *Yeehaw!* for The Dalles. And Maupin. And good 'ol Dufur. (There's something Dufur can do for you.)

Springfield, Ore., may have lost the Simpsons competition to Springfield, Vt., but we still have lots to celebrate – like our state Legislature. Thank goodness, or the universe, or whatever divine force you choose (or don't) to acknowledge, *sine die* ended the reign of democracy-foe state rep. Karen Minnis. Good riddance to that evil queen (no offense to our beloved drag queens). Hi-ho the merry-o. Can I get a big, *buh-bye*?

True, LGBTQ Oregonians still suffer the legal brunt of discrimination, harassment, and marriage apartheid. Beautiful new nondiscrimination and domestic partnership laws were passed this session but they're on hold until the 2008 election determines whether we get to keep them. Meanwhile, defending our newly legislated civil rights protections from an electoral challenge is already proving to be an uplifting effort.

Check it out. Let's have a *gran aplausa* for the pack of local lesbians who hosted a garden party fundraiser for Basic Rights Oregon. They took in more than \$7,000 – twice the goal. BRO is putting the money to good use, too. Log on to www.basirights.org and check out their "50 Voices for Equality" campaign. Wow. Fifty allies – clergy, business leaders, farmers and family folks from every corner of Oregon – have put their faces and words on the line online to speak up for nondiscrimination and domestic partnership. How cool is that?

It's already paying off. Five thousand voters – and counting – have signed the pledge to vote YES for equality in the 2008 general election.

Speaking of raising money, some 30 Eugene and Springfield LGBTQ community supporters stepped up to save The Q Center (www.qcenter.org), pitching in \$13,000 plus toward a rent drive to keep our little community center open at 1309 Lincoln St. Yay!

Another cause célèbre for our community results from taking to the streets. Old Jamaican queer basher Buju Banton has signed the "No More Murder Music" pledge. That was probably a stretch for the *Boom Bye Bye* reggae guy, but pressure from our big demonstration of outrage at the WOW Hall, combined with dozens of other protests around the world, had an impact. Now we have one less *Rasta mon* spewing negative vibrations against *batty boys*.

Speaking out against hate can and does make a difference. Sure, we can still be fired, evicted, excluded from marriage benefits and a million and one other opportunities just because of who we are, but things are changing and they're changing fast. More amazing news buzzes along the gay grapevine every day. Happiness is on the rise.

Don't buy the stereotype that queer and queer-friendly equal rights activists are on some no-sense-of-humor perpetual bummer. Oh, no. Don't confuse us with the homophobes, those dour and frightened ignoramus who simmer in wrenching disgust at all things different. While they writhe in grating impatience for the rapture, we justice-freaks see the arc of history coming around.

So much good stuff is happening that lesbian, gay, bi, trans queer folks and our allies can hardly contain ourselves. Not that we have to. Luckily our annual day of celebration is coming up. Join the party at the Eugene/Springfield PRIDE Celebration in Alton Baker Park on Saturday, Aug. 11 and have a gay old time. Yabba dabba do!

Award-winning Eugene columnist Sally Sheklow has been writing for EW since, well, longer than we can remember.



Something you're not telling us, Lon, or is this the sort of ugliness we can expect (as usual) in the November 2008 election from the, hmmm ... honorable opposition?

Matt Friday
Eugene

CONTAMINATORS

I'd like to thank the *Weekly* for printing Lon Miller's letter (7/19) in response to a recent Sheklow column.

Such diatribes operate as a refreshing reminder to us all that, in fact, the true "aberrations" and "abominations" are the hate-mongers who contaminate our society.

Peace out.

Sabrina McNamara
Eugene

CONCERN FOR MY SOUL

I am greatly disturbed by the idea that there is a group of people out there who believe they have the right to tell me and others what to do, how we should conduct our personal lives. How our conduct, out of sight from everyone, influencing no one, is now their concern.

They have formed a powerful coalition which has great sway over too many less informed individuals. Some are truly concerned for my "soul," but many more simply use religion to further their own selfish interests. They are hypocrites of the highest order. They seek gain at the expense of their fellow man even, at times, his life.

This group has great wealth which they use to buy skills who may or may not believe in what they are selling. They have a "base" of which a large part consists of the poor, the uneducated and deluded people who simply cannot understand that they are voting against their own interests when they support this group. A base whose wretched selfish goals are the same as theirs, which also include bigotry, racism and intolerance of others who do not hold the same belief system as their own.

They claim that they have higher moral standards than "us," but at the same time they lie us into an unnecessary, costly and fearfully deadly war. Practically everything concerning their public conduct is kept secret in direct conflict with everything considered democratic and often in conflict with our Constitution. Their arrogance and disdain for the concepts they promised to uphold on taking office are without bounds.

If the Democrats don't gain the upper hand in the next election, it will be from ignoring the majority of Americans fed up with this incredible misconduct and also possibly by adopting too many of their foe's immoralities.

John DeLeau
Springfield

THE EDGE OF FREEDOM

In regard to Deb Huntley's letter ("Being Edgy?" 7/12), I offer these definitions of "edgy" from UrbanDictionary.com: 4. [things] which tend to challenge societal norms and reveal the dark side" 5. "high-strung, nervous."

By the first definition, the nightclub/bar in question is indeed edgy. Deb provides an excellent example of this by her own letters in protest of their theme nights featuring consensual BDSM and, if I'm not mistaken, the only nude sushi night in town.

By the second definition, Deb herself appears edgy as she continually tries to convince adults of legal age that their consensual commercial sexual preferences are inappropriate in spite of the fact that power exchange does not promote violence when exercised with a strong ethical principle.

These are not the Woodstock days you grew up with, Deb. In fact, that generation may have taken "edgy" so far that we have little choice but to push the limits of societal acceptance with ideas and actions that make your stomach twist right up in knots.

That's what edgy is. Now you know. While I respect your desire to achieve a level of safety and security for those in peril, please remember: As long as we have freedom, we will never be safe because people will be free to make dangerous choices which may cause harm to themselves or others.

Darrel Coon
Eugene

TARGETED REMOVAL

Will Oregon hound cougars to death (cover story, 7/19)? Since cougar hunting with hounds is *illegal* and Oregon supports a healthy population of 5,000 or more cougars the answer is, of course, NO!

The HB 2971 Agent Use Bill is simply a wildlife management tool for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to use that will save \$100,000 dollars per year while removing *problem* animals. The passing of this bill does not mean more any more or fewer cougars will be removed. The removal of problem animals is *not* hunting and should never be confused with hunting. Targeted removal is a tool for professional wildlife biologists to use that is designed to manage animals that have become a threat to livestock or human safety.

Anyone not in favor of HB 2971 does not understand the simple intent of the bill and has a blatant disregard for Oregon's wildlife.

The extreme animal rights groups point to Measure 18 because they want the public to believe that the will of the voter is being tested. This of course is misleading and untruthful. Creating illusion and stirring emotion is all they can muster when going up against sound wildlife management and research.

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