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Happy New Year
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Established in 1970
Committed to Cultural Diversity

Respecting Differences

Activists stand up to bullying

BY MELISSA CHAVEZ

"I was a tom boy in school, and they called me Tommy. Then, in high school, it was Queer." Though she didn't know what it meant at the time — which was more than 40 years ago — she knew she didn't like it.

The reminiscing came as a roomful of lesbian activists, all over the age of 55, shared their stories of dealing with bullying as part of a recent "Anti-Bullying in Schools" talk held at the Q Center in north Portland.

Guest speaker Joy Wallace, Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition board chair, told of her group's efforts to end bullying and harassment of students.

The coalition has been working since 2001 to make Oregon schools a safer place for gay, lesbian, and

transsexual youth.

Working closely with national gay rights organizations, the nonprofit's work also supports community efforts to reduce youth suicide and other risk behaviors in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth population.

"We help schools start a gay-straight alliance, do a safe schools training once a year and hold a youth summit each year too," said Wallace.

When representatives from The Dalles High School came to a workshop to start an alliance, the coalition helped the student organizers and faculty adviser field parent objections. They gave advice on how to best present their case to the school board. With the group's help, Wallace said, the school board meeting's audience was filled with supportive members of the community.

Wallace said that the coalition's current main focus is to make sure Oregon schools are complying with the Oregon Safe Schools Act.

The law, which went into effect in



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Joy Wallace, chair of the Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition, leads a statewide effort to stop bullying in schools. The panels behind her at the Q Center in north Portland chronicle the decades-long struggle for civil rights by African Americans, women and gays.

2009, requires school boards to approve anti-bullying policies; put someone in charge of implementing the regulations; make sure the anti-bullying policies are updated on

school websites and in student, parent and employee handbooks; require that principals assign someone to receive reports of bullying and that the reporting role is known

to all students, parents and other school employees.

The act is in effect for K-12 public

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G.I.S

Local Rappers New York-Bound



Portland rap artists Reggie Da Boss (left) and K.O. Yessir, also known as Reggie and Robert Watkins, are New-York bound to compete in BET's '106th and Park' music completion show.

Get It Squad brothers dream big

Born and bred Portland rap artists of Get It Squad (G.I.S.), Reggie and Robert Watkins, also known as "Reggie Da Boss" or "RJ Beats" and "K.O. Yessir," have come a long way from watching BET music videos afterschool and sitting with two pens, tapping out beats on the kitchen table.

The 19 and 20 year-old brothers, sporting tuxes and retro hip-hop haircuts, were selected earlier this year in the West Coast Blaze the Stage Portland audition as winners of a trip to

New York to perform on BET's 106th & Park Show, after busting out strains from their official mix tape, Evolution of Expression.

Aside from attending Mt. Hood Community College, the rap duo is fundraising to meet their travel expense goal of \$5,000 before their BET performance date on Jan. 26.

You can help these young rap dreamers represent Portland on the New York stage; by voting by texting the letter c to 79922; donating to their travel expenses in care of Bank of America savings account 485007482107; or tuning in to BET's 106th and Park show for continued support throughout the competition.