



PHOTO BY CARI HACHMANN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Kitty Santiago and Amanda Gallagher arrived at the Clark County auditor's office in Vancouver Thursday very excited to receive their marriage license. The same-sex couple was united in a non-binding ceremony last year, but now plans to make the union legal with a marriage ceremony on Wednesday, Dec. 12, 2012.

Freedom to Marry

continued ▲ from page 3

marriage licenses for heterosexual couples, Harris and his partner of 39 years, James Griener, were finally able to get their own.

"It's a very momentous occasion," said Harris. "I feel like I am included in society as opposed to being on the fringes of society," he said. "It's a great feeling—a wonderful feeling."

Harris and Griener, who first met walking along the Brooklyn promenade overlooking the lower Manhattan skyline in New York, will be married on Wednesday, Dec. 12, 2012 (12.12.12).

Under Washington state law, couples must wait three days to get married after receiving their license. Many of the same-sex partners who received licenses on the first day, Dec. 6, planned to marry on Sunday, Dec. 9.

While being interviewed and photographed by reporters all morning, Harris said his job was still to ensure that the whole process ran smoothly for couples, so that they could be in and out with their marriage licenses as fast as possible.

Expecting an influx of people seeking licenses, the Clark County auditor's office increased staffing

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and extended hours throughout the weekend, including opening hours on Saturday.

Staff encouraged couples to fill out an online marriage license application before taking a number and waiting to be called up to one of the five issuing counters.

On the way out, Harris congratulated two other men who had a marriage certificate in hand.

"You sure made this process easy," one of the men replied.

Harris didn't think a day like this would come, he said. In the past, when voters were asked to pass same gender marriage on the ballots, it had always been defeated.

Now Washington is one of three states where the people said yes, he said. "I think it demonstrates a significant change in the attitudes

of citizens of this nation," and "It's only a matter of time before we have marriage equality in the entire U.S."

A rainbow-colored flag danced from a cool breeze in the government building's courtyard as volunteers from Equality Southwest Washington, Basic Rights Oregon, and other advocates of the LGBTQ community handed out information for same-sex couples.

But not everyone within perimeter was supportive of the movement that day.


A man pacing back and forth along the sidewalk nearby shouted oppositions. "I'm against this 100

percent!" he said.

While not everyone may be on board, many behind the same-sex marriage movement are optimistic that more people will come to realize those involved in gay and lesbian relationships are seeking the same civil liberties granted to all citizens.

"Our country is on a journey of understanding," said Basic Rights Oregon Executive Director Jeana Frazzini. "As more and more people talk to gay and lesbian friend and family about why marriage matters, they're coming to realize that this is not a political issue. This is about love, commitment and family."

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