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Seattle Counseling Service celebrates thirty years

by Matthew McQuilkin
Staff Writer

Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities, the first service of its kind in the United States, is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary for the month of October. They will be having a specific celebration called the "Fall Ferry Swing Fling" on October 22, held on *The Skansonia* on Lake Washington. Said Executive Director Ann McGettigan, the invitations they sent out said to RSVP by October 1, but they were not able to send them out until Wednesday (September 29), so an RSVP is not necessary until October 15.

In addition to the raffle, auction, and swing lessons, there will be history boards on display, representing different five-year periods in the life of SCS with photographs and personal anecdotes. SCS Director of Development Jeannie Galloway has been working with the Northwest Lesbian and Gay History Museum Project

their own, in an effort to preserve the entire history of Seattle Counseling Services to this point. In addition, said Galloway, "We just wanted to make sure we're not missing anyone in our celebration."

The Counseling Service began in 1969 with the name of Seattle Counseling Service for Homosexuals, founded by Bob Deisher, a man who had done some research on gay youth in Seattle at the time at the University of Washington. In his interview with the History Project, he said he got so many calls from people wanting to talk to him after word got out about this study, that someone suggested to him that he start a counseling service.

Deisher told the History Project, "I wrote Reed Erickson," from the Erickson Foundation, "and I told him essentially that I was getting a lot of calls from people and I just wondered what the possibility would be of setting

Northwest AIDS Walk meets its goals



Walkers at NW AIDS WALK.

by Matthew McQuilkin
Staff Writer

Last Sunday approximately 10,000 people came to downtown Seattle to take part in the thirteenth annual Northwest AIDS Walk. With a new starting and

route, participants were generally responsive to the changes, and donated enough money for Northwest AIDS Foundation to consider it a success. As of Saturday (September 25), \$800,000 had been turned in.

"That puts us right on target

hosted the event; Regence BlueShield; and KUBE 93 FM. NWAF Executive Director Terry Stone was presented with a \$15,000 check from the radio station.

Jean Enersen then introduced

later and stayed there for two more years. "I was around in the wings after I left," she said, "but I was exhausted." Michelle Munro, the current Associate Director,

gery, but in that time they have no identification—such things as resumes had to stay in the name of the opposite gender. She said people were forced into prostitution in or-

der to support themselves in that time, and they had to get hormones on the black market. "We were concerned about people who had fallen through the cracks."

Larson helped set up their gender program through this, which has now grown into a separate program outside of SCS. Transition and Identity Counselor Marsha Botzer, of the Ingersoll Gender Center, was also involved with SCS in the late seventies. "Seattle has progressed some," said Larson. "Some of the things we did then, regular institutes can do now."

A few things were tried in the early years while Larson was there which weren't ultimately successful. She said they tried a Flying Squad: "They would go out in the middle of the night, find you in despair and help you until you were okay." This didn't last very long because it was so taxing on the volunteers. "We were offering it at a time when just being gay was a crisis," she said.

After the helpline was established, SCS moved on into more services, eventually becoming a drop-in place where free individual counseling could be found. "We became in a way like a community center," said Jeannie Galloway. "We were really doing some pioneering work here in Seattle." By the time Arleen Nelson, who currently works at SCS and started in 1979, came on board, there were only three or four paid staff members and 20 volunteers.

"I'm very proud to be a part of this agency," said Nelson, "because it has been able to sustain itself through a lot of changes." From 1979 to 1989 Nelson contracted her services with SCS, sometimes paid and sometimes volunteer. In 1989 she joined the staff as their HIV/AIDS programs coordinator, having coordinated all three of their AID programs: psychotherapy for persons with AIDS; crisis intervention counseling for persons with HIV (both of which still exist but are now one program); and providing oversight for HIV testing counselors at Seattle Gay Clinic.

Nelson got involved because of her son telling her he was Gay. "I started becoming involved in one way or another in work and activities as a supporter of the gay commu-

nity," she said. Someone suggested she get involved with SCS, and SCS asked her to develop a training for the Connections program, which was then known as Emergency Services. She said that as a clinical social worker, "It seemed to me this would be the way to put together my profession and my need to serve a community where I had a particular passion. When I found out about my son, it became very clear to me that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons need advocates, people to stand up and say that this is all right."

"To me," said Ann McGettigan, who was Executive Director of Seattle Rape Relief for ten years before being hired at SCS in October 1998, "thirty years of history means 30 years of people's lives being touched. There's a lot of people in this community stretching across the country who have been touched by us." She said that now, they have about 20 paid staff members and around 40 volunteers. "We have these broad mental health services," she said, "but we have focuses on youth, elders, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence and sexual assault," and she said there is also a perpetrator group. "We receive court referrals for folks who have been charged." All of their staff are Masters-level therapists, and they have both a nurse practitioner and a psychiatrist on staff.

As for the future, said McGettigan, she would like to see more diversity in their funding. "Being in the system has meant responding to a lot of changes. We've done well to stay afloat." She also said that "I'm not sure how we look in the community. People don't realize how comprehensive our services are, and I don't know what's [still] needed. I want to continue this discussion." She also said, "I really think SCS is a gem that has really yet to be discovered."

Jeannie Galloway said that they encourage readers of SGN to talk to them if they have any personal anecdotes of their own about the thirty-year history of Seattle Counseling Services, because it might be put into their history project. Anyone with ideas, questions or concerns can contact her at SCS. (206) 333-1768 ext 115. ■

AIDS WALK

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better some of the time," said Chips. She said success can only be claimed when "everyone is simply well."

This year the Walk also honored the Noble Effort team, currently the second-highest fund raising "Friends and Family" AIDS Walk team in the country. Walking in memory of Daniel Noble, one of the team's founders who died in 1993, they have raised more than \$125,000 since 1990.

Near the end of the opening ceremonies, King County Executive Ron Sims promoted raising money and creating community awareness. "We march because our job is not done," he said. "We have made a difference... but our job is not done until we find a cure. That's when our job is done." He then asked the crowd a number of times, "How long do we have to wait?" so that everyone would yell back, "Not long!" He had a young man come up to the stage to help him. Then he had everyone in the crowd turn to the person next to them and give them a hug and ask each other how long we have to wait: "Not long."

"We'll walk, and we'll walk, and we'll walk," he said, "and we'll hug each other." Enersen came back to the stage and asked, "How long will Ron Sims talk?"

"Not long!" the crowd said. And after a short bit of aerobics, the walk was underway, down Fifth Avenue to Westlake Center and back on Fourth. Half of Fifth was closed for the crowd, but the city felt it would be dispersed enough by the time they came back on Fourth that they would easily be able to stay on the sidewalk. "Most of the feedback we got was really really positive," said Tammy Kincaid. In terms of the shortened distance of the walk, "People didn't seem to think that really took away from it."

Once the walkers returned, they were entertained by HB Radke and the Jet City Swingers, performing on the same stage where the opening ceremonies occurred, at the flag pavilion (with each flag pole waving Pride flags). Every so often band mem-



Walkers at NW AIDS WALK.

tween the seats while playing.

Kincaid said that people had a very positive reaction to the new location at the International Fountain. "Attention did become more focused," she said, because it brought the crowd closer together than they could be at Memorial Stadium in years past. According to NWAF Director of Development and Marketing Lee Heck, responses were "Overwhelmingly positive." He said some of the things people said about it included "a big block party," "a festival atmosphere," and "very intimate."

"It had a better community feel," said Heck. "One of our goals was to create a sense of community about it... The crowd was much closer, and much more focused on the stage." He said feedback about the

♦ *continued from Page 17*
behavior that spreads AIDS and other diseases, and imposes huge health costs on all of us" as well as "Giving homosexuals special legal rights and privileges, under the guise of anti-discrimination laws, degrades legitimate protection for individuals based on factors beyond their control, such as race, gender and national origin."

Though State Civil Rights legislation seldom interferes with private groups, the petition material apparently offers no elaboration on such claims, or how other minority rights are eroded by inclusion of additional minority categories. Initiative 608 sponsor CERNR is a consortium formed in January 1994 of groups including Washington for Traditional Values (founded by former CAW chairman Robert Larimer Jr.) and the Washington Public Affairs Council. A non-profit corporation based in Tacoma (where it unsuccessfully introduced anti-gay legislation six years ago), WPAC reportedly has close ties with Colorado for Family Values, a sponsor in 1992 of that state's Amendment 2, which excluded homosexuals from civil rights protection before being declared unconstitutional in 1993.

CERNR is also allied with Bellevue's Washington Family Council, an organization formed "in association with Focus on the Family to promote Christian family values in Washington State," and directed by Jeff Kemp, son of the Congressman. Focus on the Family, based in Colorado Springs, was another sponsor of Amendment 2. The 1,238-employee group reports an \$86 million annual budget and sponsors radio programs heard in 48 Washington communities.

The CERNR board includes State Rep Val Stevens (R-Snohomish), a regular sponsor of bills denying homosexuals from foster parenting, and Rep. Steve Fuhrman, who has sponsored legislation requiring quarantine of AIDS patients and mandatory HIV testing of all marriage license applicants and hospital patients.

Another sponsor of Initiative 608 is the Washington Alliance of Families, an affiliate of Tacoma's Washington Public Affairs Council. Based in Lynden, WAF is lead by conservative activist Cathy Mickels, a spokesperson for CERNR, and a board member of Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, the national pro-family group against the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion. A leading opponent of education reform as well, Mickels has said, "When you talk about trying to teach things like critical thinking, many times it can undermine the values taught in the home."

Initiative 610 proposes "The Minority Status and Child Protection Act," which also seeks amendment of Chapter 49.60 of the State Constitution to read, in part, "The people find that inappropriate sexual behavior does not form an appropriate basis upon which to construct a minority or class status relating to civil rights. To identify oneself as a person who participates in or who expresses openly a desire for inappropriate sexual behavior, such as homosexuality, does not constitute a legitimate minority classification. The People establish that objection to homosexuality based upon one's convictions is a right of conscience and shall not be considered discrimination relating to civil rights by a unit, branch, department, or agency of state or local government."

The initiative also holds that "in the State of Washington, including all political subdivisions... minority status does not apply to homosexuality" and thus bans gays and lesbians from protection as such under existing Civil Rights due process legislation. Further, the State may fund no program or activity "that has the purpose or effect of promoting or expressing approval of homosexuality" and may consider "private lawful sexual behaviors" grounds for firing individuals should their behavior (or, presumably, their status) "disrupt(s) the workplace."

Subsequent sections of Initiative 610 bear such titles as:

- "The public educational system shall not promote or express approval of homosexuality."
- "Foster parent status and adoption by persons participating in homosexuality prohibited."
- "Marriage between persons of the same gender prohibited and natural gender defined."

This section states that "the gender... established at the conception of all persons is the only and natural gender of that person for the duration of the person's life. Physical alterations to the human body do not affect the natural gender..."

Initiative 610 sponsor CAW was formed in 1993 as a tax-exempt educational foundation that also supports political action committees such as Stop Special Rights, which printed public copies of the initiative.

Led by Sam Woodard (recent replacement for Robert Larimer Jr.), CAW reportedly was organized under the guidance of Lon Mabon, founder of the Oregon Citizens Alliance, whose anti-homosexual Measure 9 was narrowly defeated in Oregon two years ago.

Fulfilling his promise to bring such measures to Washington and Idaho, Mabon joined Kelly Walton, director of the allied Idaho Citizens Alliance, in accompanying Woodard to Olympia January 10 for the initiative's filing.

The CAW Statement of Principles includes strong endorsement of "the equal worth of all persons," decrying "discrimination based on race, religion, or national origin, or arbitrary discrimination based upon gender" but insisting that "there should not be laws granting civil rights protections based on behavior that is morally wrong or injurious to public health, nor should government legitimize such behavior."

Mabon's movement went national last November with the forming of the United States Citizens Alliance.

CONSTITUTIONAL OPPOSITIONS

Opponents have twice tried to keep the initiatives from coming before the public. Claiming that 608 and 610 are unconstitutional, a coalition of groups sought a court injunction February 15 preventing Secretary of State Ralph Munro from certifying the petitions. Though Judge Marsha Pechman disallowed the order, she commented that the constitutional arguments provided a strong basis for challenging the initiatives once filed.

A similar coalition—including the WA Association of Churches, the ACLU, and the Northwest Women's Law Center—subsequently requested the State Supreme Court to declare the initiatives unconstitutional and bar them from the November ballot.

Seeking to "save the public a grueling, possibly harmful debate over what are clearly unconstitutional proposals," attorney Margaret McKeown of the WAC told the *Seattle Gay News* that the group opposed the initiatives on three grounds:

- as unconstitutional attempts to restrict the fundamental rights of a particular group;
- as violations of the State Constitution's single subject rule for initiatives because both address questions of employment, education, custody, and several other issues;
- as beyond the legislative task assigned to initiatives.

Though recent anti-gay initiatives in Oregon and Florida have been deemed unconstitutional on similar grounds, Washington Attorney General Christine Gregoire has said she is duty-bound to see the initiatives through November's election should they gather enough signatures for inclusion on the ballot. A determination on whether the State Supreme Court will hear constitutional challenges to the initiatives will be made May 12.

Among the most prominent and active groups challenging the initiatives is a coalition called Washington Citizens for Fairness, which has launched the Hands Off Washington Campaign (WCF/HOW) in direct response to Mabon's announced intentions.

An association of such groups as the Washington Labor Council, the Washington Education Association, and the Washington State Environmental Council, WCF/HOW was "established to defeat organized statewide political efforts which limit or deny the civil rights of any Washington resident. Our immediate goal is to

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