

Specialists, Womyn Networking is open to lesbian, bisexual or transgender women and supporters who are self-employed or own their own businesses. "I thought of the idea for this group about four or five weeks ago when I was searching for lesbian networking groups and coming up empty-handed," she said. A member of the Portland Area Business Association's BizBuilders group, Viola wanted to create a queer women's networking group that would help other women's businesses in our community grow while also growing her own business.

Renee Spears, founder of Rose City Mortgage, is an inspiration for Viola. "She has come so far in business, and her success is admirable. She is constantly coming up with new, creative ways to help people while going after her dreams."

Viola chose to hold Womyn Networking meetings at Q Center to bring more attention to the new resource. "I believe that the Q Center is a valuable resource to the queer community that not enough people know about yet," she said.

With a list of guest speakers she plans to invite and several ideas for bringing awareness of women's issues to the group, Viola said she has a general structure for how the meetings will run. "This [first] meeting will mostly be informative. I will be asking for suggestions so that the group will ultimately be created by its members. Women are such a powerful force when they are brought together, and I really believe this group is going to be amazing!"

Womyn Networking meetings are free, but a \$5 monthly donation to Q Center is suggested.

### New Hires Join BRO

Jessica Lee is Basic Rights Oregon's new queer youth organizer. Originally from Bothell, Wash., she recently moved to Portland from Olympia, where she lived for seven years. Before earning a bachelor's degree in liberal arts from Evergreen State College in 2002, she organized the Women of Color Coalition.

Lee later joined Planned Parenthood of Western Washington, where she did community education and clinical work. She also trained the organization's teen council to be peer educators in public schools. "That is something I aim to do in this position," she said.

As a part of a three-year grant from the Queer Youth Fund, Lee will help develop tomorrow's leaders. "We will be providing resources for youth under 23 to become politically active and gain leadership skills," she said. "The first year will focus on creating a statewide coalition on campuses. I'll be working with Oregon Students Equal Rights



SHAMIS COHEN

Heather Starr heads up Central Oregon's Basic Rights Action Team.

Alliance to try and unify college groups to be a stronger force."

After getting students registered and interested in the upcoming election, Lee will provide materials on how to lobby the Legislature. "It's a really great opportunity for BRO to get this grant to integrate youth to be part of the organization and be a part of the leadership," she said. "To me, it's a really exciting prospect."

Heather Starr is an Oregon native and an out lesbian. She is also a Unitarian Universalist minister and BRO's new Central Oregon field organizer. Living and working in Bend, she will focus on building community and educating and engaging people in sexual minority issues on both the local and state level.

In college, Starr volunteered with Support Our Communities PAC in the fight against 1994's Measure 13. She later served as program coordinator for University of Pennsylvania's queer center. Starr then began training for the ministry.

"I'm really passionate about building communities and connections that will make Oregon a more welcoming place for GLBT folks, which is also one of my focuses of my ministry," she says.

Starr is working to inform people in Central Oregon about the upcoming election. She will then connect with BRO and other Basic Rights Action Teams around the state to work on issues based on election outcomes.

As a minister, Starr recognizes the connection between her two worlds. "In both cases, it's about creating sanctuaries for people to get to know each other better, realize common concerns and learn how to best be involved in a way that nourishes them and makes the world better place at the same time." 10

By JAYMEE R. CUTI and MALKA GEFFEN



Basic Rights Oregon welcomes queer youth organizer Jessica Lee.

**Pedal Pusher**  
For the Ride of Your Life

**CYCLE GENIUS "SPARROW" \$699.99**

Style and Simplicity.  
Get Noticed and Get Comfortable!

jim@gopedalpusher.com or 503-380-1286

**Gray Gardens**  
Furniture · Vintage Clothing · Antiques

7400 N Lombard St. Portland 97203  
503-285-4959  
www.TheGrayGardens.com

**bella stella**  
FRESH STUFF FOR KIDS

New and gently used clothing, toys, furniture & gear

Unique hand-crafted local, organic & European goods

ALL FAMILIES WELCOME

2635 NE Broadway  
www.bellastellaresale.com 503.284.4636

The Mothership of Yarn Shops

**YARN GARDEN**  
Every Fiber, Every Color, Every Sense. Friendly, Creative Staff

Enjoy tasty food and drink at The Sipperie, while you knit.

Yarn Garden University · A Class for Every Reason · Open Knitting  
**503-239-7950**  
10-9 Mon-Thurs · 10-6 Fri · 10-5 Sat · 12-5 Sun  
**1413 SE Hawthorne Blvd**  
www.yarnarden.net

**Joseph K**  
Wedding Rings  
"A Family Owned Business Since 1961"

Bring in your old gold, we will custom design something special for you.

Loose Diamond Sale!  
1.04 VS1-F color, only \$3995 (GIA-Cert.)

Up to 40% off selected merchandise!

\* Diamond Broker \* In-House Custom Design  
\* Repair & Gem Setting While You Wait  
\* 1 Year Interest Free Financing

**GRAND OPENING SALE**

Downtown Portland • 539 SW Broadway, Portland, OR 97201 • 503-228-0045

**Portland Spa & boutique** "Voted Portland's Best Spa by Citysearch"

**Free BlackBerry 8700\* with Bluetooth headset**

with the purchase of any men's facial service and \$100 in Nickel for Men Skin Care products.

Some restrictions apply. For complete details call 877-281-5216

Portland's only riverfront spa • 503.222.0105